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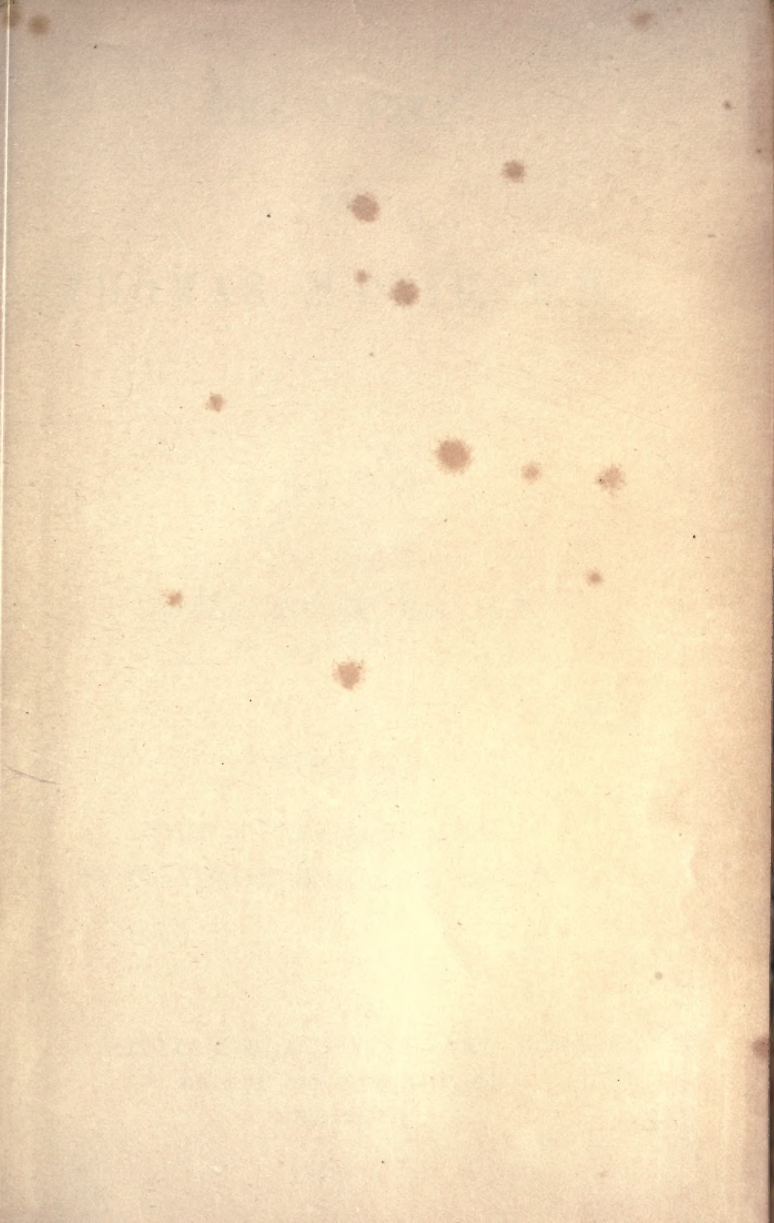


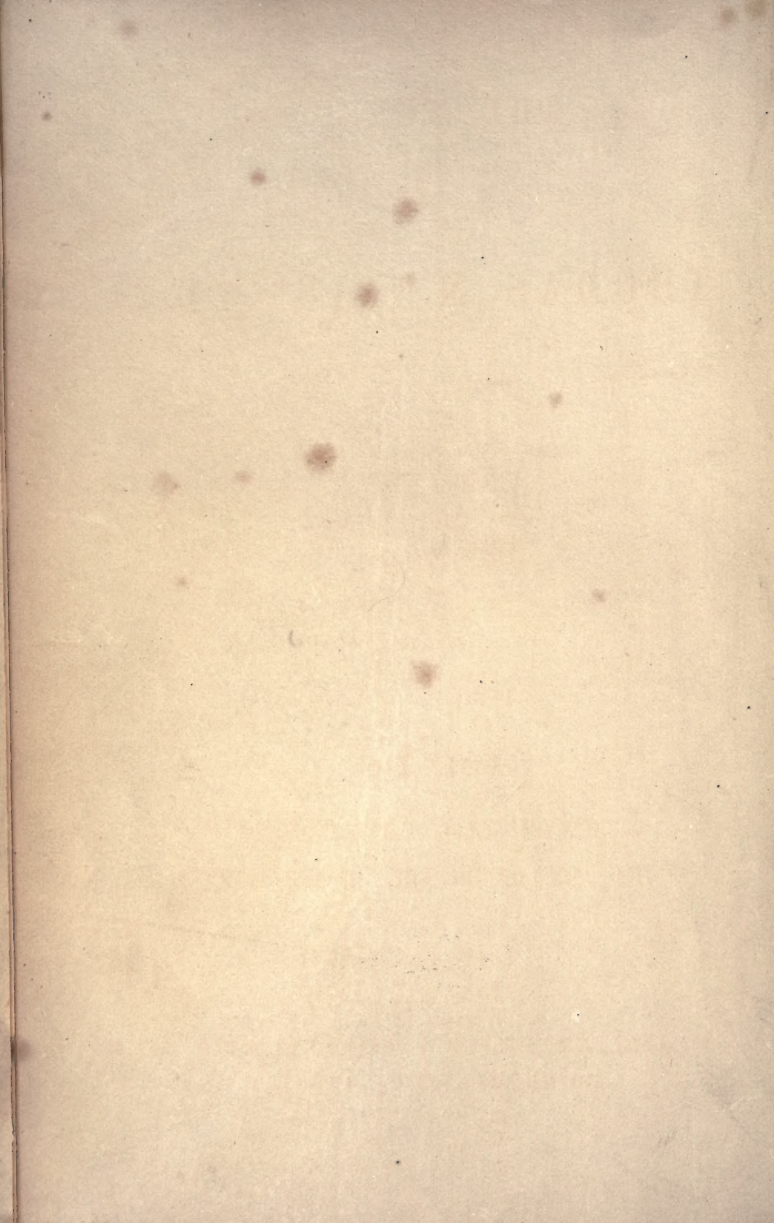
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THE WORKS
OF
THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D.

A New Edition

EDITED BY HIS SON

THOMAS M'CRIE, D.D. LL.D.

VOL. IV.

REVIEW OF "TALES OF MY LANDLORD"
ON THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH: AND SERMONS

WILLIAM BLACKWOOD AND SONS
EDINBURGH AND LONDON
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THE WORLD

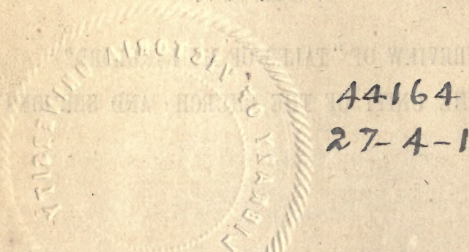
THOMAS M. CRIE, D.D.

3rd Edition

EMMANUEL

THOMAS M. CRIE, D.D.

VOL. IV



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WILLIAM M. CRIE, D.D.

EMMANUEL

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE following Review first appeared in the pages of the *Christian Instructor*, a religious periodical, under the editorship of the late celebrated Dr Andrew Thomson of Edinburgh. It extended over the numbers of that periodical for January, February, and March 1817. From the Life of Dr M'Crie, it appears that he was induced to undertake the task of reviewing the *Tales of My Landlord*, by his ardent and energetic friend, the editor, who urged him not to spare the author; to praise his Scotch, but reprobate his principles with all his might.

Our reviewer entered on his task *con amore*, and produced a critique which excited at the same time the liveliest sensation. In the Tale of *Old Mortality*, "The Great Unknown" had intruded into ground still held sacred in Scotland, and represented the heroes of the Covenant as little better than madmen, fanatics, and cut-throats. He had besides employed all the charms of his pen to throw an air of attractive romance around the character of Claverhouse, the bitter persecutor of the Covenanters, who, from the deep share he took in the sanguinary proceedings of that unhappy period, was long held in abhorrence throughout Scotland, under the designation of "Bloody Claverse." In the judgment of the Scottish public, the Review was held to be a complete refutation of the historical misstatements of the novelist, and a successful vindication of the vilified Covenanters. But it has been remarked, "it was something more than this in the eyes of Scott and his admirers, for it attacked him with a strength of wit and power of sarcasm that threatened to turn the laugh against himself, and foil him at his own chosen weapon." As the authorship of the *Tales* was then more than suspected, so that of the

Review did not long remain unknown ; and it was held to be no ordinary contest when the type of ancient feudalism was seen pitted against the representative of its old adversary, the Whiggism of the Covenant.

The feelings of Scott under the castigation of his reviewer are revealed in his *Life* by Lockhart. "The author of a very good *Life* of Knox," he says to one of his correspondents, "has made a most energetic attack, upon the score that the old Covenanters are not treated with decorum. I have not read it, and certainly never shall. I really think there is nothing in the book that is not very fair and legitimate subject of raillery ; and I own I have my suspicions of that very susceptible devotion which so readily takes offence ; but do they suppose, because they are virtuous, and choose to be thought outrageously so, 'there shall be no cakes and ale ? Ay, by our lady, and ginger shall be hot in the mouth too.'" "But," says Lockhart, "though Scott, when he first heard of these invectives, expressed his resolution never even to read them, he found the impression they were producing so strong that he soon changed his purpose, and finally devoted a very large part of his article for the *Quarterly Review* to an elaborate defence of his own picture of the Covenanters."—(*Life of Sir W. Scott*, vol. iv. p. 34.) The defence here referred to is contained in a review of his own work in the *Quarterly Review* for January 1817, and in vol. xix. of Scott's *Miscellaneous Prose Works*. It consists partly in an attempt to turn the edge of Dr M'Crie's "invectives," as Lockhart terms them, with a jest, and partly to vindicate the historical verisimilitude of the tale by referring to some of the most questionable sayings and doings which characterised the extreme partly among the Covenanters. His private sentiments are brought out more frankly in his correspondence with Southey. "As for my good friend Dundee," he says, "I admit he was *tant soit peu* savage, but he was a noble savage ; and the beastly Covenanters, against whom he acted, hardly had any claim to be called men, unless what was founded on their walking upon their hind-feet."—(*Life of Scott*, vol. ii. p. 134.) Entertaining such views of the parties, and having, as he admits, "many Cavalier prejudices instilled into him," he could hardly be expected to do justice to them even in a work of fiction ; and

it is now generally allowed by those who have read the following Vindication of the Covenanters, that the prince of novelists was guilty of taking the most inexcusable liberties with the facts of history.

But though Presbyterians in general, and indeed all north of the Tweed who were acquainted with the facts, hailed this Vindication with delight, and even while enjoying the Tale make all allowances for the exaggerations of the novelist, it is otherwise with English readers. Few of them have seen this Review ; and the greater part, utterly incognisant of the genuine history of the times, have taken their impressions of the character and the principles of men, and of the struggles and sufferings of the period, from the racy and romantic exhibitions of *Old Mortality*, actually receiving these as the truthful delineations of history ! Nothing could more clearly evince the necessity of such an exposure ; nothing more completely justify the protest taken by the reviewer against the tendency of such historical pantomimes, in which truth is sacrificed for the amusement of holiday readers ; nothing more strikingly shows the expediency of giving more extended circulation to the Vindication before us, which is as much required now as it was at the period of its first appearance.

THOMAS M'CRIE.

EDINBURGH, *October* 1856.



REVIEW

OF

"TALES OF MY LANDLORD."

PART I.

OF all the classes of readers in this book-reading age and country, there is none more numerous, or less difficult to please, than the readers of novels. This is a very fortunate circumstance for book-makers and book-venders, or, as they may nowadays be more properly termed, the wholesale and retail dealers in books ; as it affords them an expeditious and lucrative trade, which they can carry on at small expense, and which remains steady and open, even when the market stagnates and is overstocked, for want of demand in the other articles of literature. The great object of habitual readers of novels is to kill time, and they are not very scrupulous as to the means which they employ to rid themselves of this troublesome companion. Their minds are vacant, and nature abhors a vacuum. There is nothing which they dread more than being left to serious reflection, or thrown upon their own internal resources. Their feelings, though often morbid, and requiring force to excite them, are not delicate ; nor is their taste fastidious. The task of those whose employment it is to afford them amusement is not therefore one of great difficulty. It requires no superior powers of invention, or of wit, to dress up a story which will gratify readers of this stamp, and raise the wished-for alternations of emotion in the giddy breasts, or perhaps brains,

———"of th' unthinking rabble,
Giggling, sobbing, at each frantic fable."

But the strongest and the most quick-set appetite will be palled by indulgence, and will require to be whetted and humoured by nicer food or nicer preparation. This was the origin of the art and philosophy of cookery, and a similar cause has led to the improvement of that branch of the art of writing to which we refer. When we say this, we would not be understood as meaning to insinuate that all those fictitious

works which rise above mediocrity have originated from such inferior motives. We do not consider Count Rumford as occupying the same rank with ordinary writers on the culinary art, and we do not wish to confound sober reformers with demagogues who would debauch the minds and inflame the passions of the mob, to gain their own selfish and unprincipled ends. We are willing to allow that there are individuals who commence novel-writers with the more generous and disinterested design of reforming the public taste, and of furnishing more rational and refined gratification to a numerous class of readers. To such writers we are ready to give all the praise that is due. And indeed, when we consider the mass of insipid, stupid, and pernicious productions with which our circulating libraries are stuffed, and which are daily tossed from hand to hand until they are literally worn to tatters, we cannot but think that a man of genius and taste, who condescends to join such company, displays at once a great degree of courage and of self-denial, and we are not greatly surprised to find him choosing to send the offspring of his fancy into the world without his name, or under a false one, contented with enjoying his reputation, and the other fruits of his labour, *incognito*, and concealing himself from the public by means of a complicated piece of literary machinery.

Most of our readers must have heard of, and not a few of them, it is probable, have read those popular novels which lately appeared in this northern part of the island, and which, from the peculiar manners which they represented, and the ability of their execution, attracted the attention even of those who have no predilection for this species of composition. The earliest of these cannot be called a finished piece of writing. The principal character in it wants those great qualities which are essential to a hero; his conduct justly subjects him to the suspicion of cowardice; and he becomes a deserter and a rebel, without the excuse of being actuated by principle and conviction;—a piece of management on the part of the author, which can only be accounted for on the supposition, that he was not unwilling that the chief honour should be transferred to another individual, whom, even in these times, it would not have been prudent or becoming to have proclaimed as the hero of this story. Yet, in spite of these and other faults, by his picturesque descriptions of Highland scenery, by his striking, though sometimes exaggerated, delineations of Highland manners, and, above all, by skilfully combining his fabulous narrative with the interesting history of the Rebellion, and the fates of the adventurous and unfortunate Chevalier, the author has given an interest to the work which cannot fail to make it be read with pleasure, long after the charm produced by the novelty of its appearance has ceased. Next appeared "The Astrologer," disdaining to derive aid from any adventitious association with real history, and scarcely deigning to symbolise with the speech and manners of common life. Trusting to the preternatural powers with which she was endowed, this heroine came forth with

more than Amazonian courage, and by the waving of her magic wand, and the unearthly sounds which accompanied it, enchanted and subdued all that came within the reach of her potent and irresistible spell. In truth, the picture of that singular and now nearly extinct race of beings, the gypsies, is inimitably drawn, and their character throughout the piece is supported with the utmost propriety and consistency. We do not therefore wonder at the popularity of *Guy Mannering* in Scotland, where the language in which a great part of the work is written, and the manners it describes, are known ; but we must confess that we are somewhat at a loss to account for the fact, of which we have been assured, that it is equally popular in England, where we are persuaded not one word in three is understood by the generality of readers, and where we should think the entertainment derived from the story must have been in no small degree marred by the continual exercise of turning over the two quarto volumes of Dr Jamieson's Scottish Dictionary, or, when these were not to be had, the glossary to Allan Ramsay, or Robert Burns's Poems. Lastly appeared *The Antiquary*. The popularity acquired by its predecessors was sufficient to put this work in motion ; but it became stationary as soon as the impulse which they imparted to it was spent. Whether it is that the author, having exhausted his powers by the last effort, had not allowed them sufficient time to recruit ; or whether, from certain leanings in his own mind, he was unwilling to make the Antiquary truly ridiculous ; or whether (which we are rather inclined to think is the truth) antiquaries are a race of beings to whom the public are so completely indifferent, that it is impossible to interest them in a story that turns chiefly upon them and their pursuits ;—the fact is certain, that, notwithstanding all the humour of Edie Ochiltree (and it is not small), and notwithstanding the excellence of particular scenes, the story was deemed tame and fatiguing ; and the chief thing that will now induce any to read it (those who live on novels always excepted), is the information on the title-page, that it was written by the author of *Waverley* and *Guy Mannering*.

We have chosen to introduce ourselves in this way to *Tales of My Landlord*, because we are convinced that they are written by the author of the works which we have just noticed. For what reason this information has been withheld, it is unnecessary to inquire. Perhaps it was on account of the fact stated above ; perhaps the author intended to pay a compliment to the reigning passion for novelty ; perhaps he wished merely to gratify his own humour. Our opinion as to the point of identity of original is founded on internal evidence. The resemblance is strongly marked, both on the general features and in the minuter lines. We can trace it in that wonderful talent for description which the author almost uniformly displays, whether he wishes to paint human beings or natural scenery,—the sublimity of a battle, or the brawlings of a taproom,—the movements of a hero, or the fooleries of a

clown. We can trace it in the different kinds of character which he brings forward for exhibition, and in the partiality with which he selects, for his more careful and minute delineation, such as are to be found in low life. We can trace it in those marks of haste and carelessness which are every now and then reminding us, that he either will not, or cannot, take time to do justice to his own powers, and that he writes without having in his mind's eye that prospective arrangement which is necessary to prevent his story from having, in some parts, an unfinished aspect, and from presenting us, in others, with very awkward attempts to obviate the difficulties that his want of foresight has occasioned. And, finally, we can trace it in the uncommon ease, and the purity, if we may use the expression, with which the Scottish language is written—a quality in which the author has no compeer among those who have made the same attempt, and which resembles, to compare small things with great, the facility and correctness with which the learned in the sixteenth century wrote in the ancient language of Rome.

In the work before us we are presented with two tales. The one is comprised in the first volume; the other occupies the remaining three volumes. The first tale will, we doubt not, be interesting to those who are admirers of the local habits and opinions which are said to have existed a century ago in that district of the Scottish borders where the scene is laid, and which are chiefly known to the public by means of the writings of Walter Scott. From the natural and easy manner in which he describes these, the author appears to be a native of that place, or one who, from his infancy, has been accustomed to the relation of its traditionary history. With respect to the story, we cannot say much. The author himself seems to have been anxious to have done with it, and huddles it up at last in rather a careless manner; and we may be pardoned for following his example. Hobbie Elliot is a well-drawn character. Earnscliff, like most of the author's principal characters, does not do much to give us a high opinion of him, although he says many good things. Of the Black Dwarf (whom some have taken for the hero of the tale) we shall say nothing,—only we do not think him a more unnatural character than Ellieslaw; nor do any of the misanthropic ravings of the former appear to us so incredible as the epistle which the latter is made to address to his daughter after the detection of his plots. The attempt to give interest to the story, by connecting it with the rebellion in 1715, fails as completely as the rebellion itself did, and serves only to embarrass the author. The undisguised manner in which the conspirators talk of their projected insurrection in the presence of Ratcliffe, even before they had formally resolved on it, and when they were aware that the better and greater part of the population around them was friendly to the government, represents them as greater madmen than we imagine the Borderers ever were. After this, the laboured description of the revulsion of spirits felt by them when they came to the decisive step, although it would have been striking in other circumstances, has something affected in it. At all

events, when they had taken the leap, it is quite inexcusable to make a fool of such a respectable and sensible man as Ratcliffe appears to have been, by supposing that he would make a grave and serious speech, with the view of recalling such men to their allegiance, unless the author wished to exhibit him as so puritanical in his principles as to make the affair a matter of conscience, and to think it a duty to give his testimony against such courses ; in which case (if our ideas of the character of the Borderers, especially when they were heated with wine, are not very incorrect) these gentlemen would have sent him, as Lauderdale did his predecessors, to make his dying speech and testimony on the nearest gallows. In short, the Black Dwarf bears sufficient marks of being a child of the same family with the Astrologer ; but, whether received before his birth or after it, he has had the misfortune to meet with some great injury, and is a dwarf.—We now go on to the second tale, or rather history as it should be called, which, from the nature of its contents, as well as its size, demands more ample and serious consideration than the preceding one could claim.

On opening the second volume, and while we hesitated in turning the first leaf, we could not but feel surprised that the author should have permitted himself to allow either the publisher or the printer to do anything in such bad taste as to repeat the foolish lines, which must have been foisted, without his knowledge, into the title-page of the first volume, and also the quotation on the reverse in Spanish and English. Having ventured to turn the leaf, we were most agreeably disappointed at not meeting, as we had dreaded, with the huge bulk of *Jedediah Cleishbotham*, and being overwhelmed with his somniferous eloquence. This might help to increase the pleasure which we received from reading the preliminary discourse of Mr Patrick Pattieson. We do think that it is written in the very best style, and that it forms an introduction to the tale at once ingenious and appropriate. With some of his reflections towards the close of it we do not indeed entirely coincide, as will appear in the sequel ; but as we are desirous to enter upon his story in good terms with him, we shall pass them over at present.

To enable our readers to understand the remarks which we are about to offer, it will be necessary to lay before them an outline of the story, which is called *Old Mortality*, to intimate, that the principal materials of which it is composed were derived from the information of an aged Presbyterian wanderer who went by that name ; although, in fact, by far the greater part of it is of such a quality as cannot be supposed to have been furnished by that or by any other zealous and venerable Covenanter. The story is supposed to commence in the summer of 1679, immediately before that rising of the Presbyterians in the west of Scotland which was suppressed by their defeat at Bothwell Bridge. Henry Morton, the hero of the piece, was the son of a country gentleman in Lanarkshire, who, during the civil wars between Charles I. and the Parliaments, had borne arms for the latter, and of course was a zealous Whig and Presbyterian. By his death, young Morton was left to the

care of an uncle, a miserly wretch, who neglected the education and repressed the ardent spirit of his nephew. Henry Morton was a Presbyterian because his father had been one before him, and he attended the sermons of a minister of that persuasion who had accepted the Indulgence because his uncle did so ; but he took no farther interest in the affairs of that religious body, than by condemning the oppressions which they suffered, which was balanced by his accusing them, in their turn, of extravagance and fanaticism. But if he was undecided and lukewarm in politics and in religion, Morton was cordial and devoted in his attachment to Miss Edith Bellenden, a young lady, of course, of great beauty and accomplishments, who lived in the neighbourhood of his uncle, under the tutelage of her grandmother. He had reason to conclude that his addresses were not indifferent to the person who was the object of them ; but the keen Tory and High-Church principles of the old lady presented a formidable obstacle to his success, which was heightened by his having the accomplished Lord Evandale for a rival. Having gained the prize for shooting at a mark, at a weaponschaw or military review in the neighbouring village, Morton, according to custom, entertained the company at the inn, where he met with a stranger, who requested leave to accompany him home, as he meant to travel the same road. The stranger turned out to be John Balfour of Burley, who had just escaped from Fife after being engaged in the assassination of Archbishop Sharp. Concealing this circumstance, Burley acquainted Morton with his name, and requested accommodation for the night in his uncle's house, as he was in danger of falling into the hands of one of those bands of military who traversed the country to apprehend such as were obnoxious to Government. Although extremely reluctant to comply with it, Morton could not deny this request to one who had formerly been the intimate friend and companion in arms of his father, and he lodged him in an outhouse. A few days after, a party of soldiers paid a visit to the place, and Morton having acknowledged, rather sillily, what he had done, was made prisoner, and carried to the castle of Tillietudlem, the residence of Miss Edith Bellenden, where Colonel Grahame of Claverhouse was expected next day with his regiment. Claverhouse, after being made acquainted with the circumstances, was about to order the prisoner to be instantly shot, but finally yielded to spare his life at the intercession of Lord Evandale, whose interest Miss Bellenden had bespoke in his favour. Morton was present as a prisoner at the battle of Drumclog or Loudon Hill, where Claverhouse was defeated. Having obtained his liberty, resentment for recent injuries roused his patriotism (this is not the author's phrase) ; he joined the victorious Covenanters, was chosen one of their officers, and admitted to their council of war. He now exerted himself in organising their army, and in accommodating the differences between the rigid and moderate Presbyterians. In this he was far from being successful ; yet he prevailed, before the battle of Bothwell Bridge, in obtaining the consent of the majority of the council

to a moderate proposal, which he presented to the Duke of Monmouth, the commander of the king's forces, at a personal interview which he obtained with his Grace, in the presence of General Dalziel and Colonel Grahame.

Having escaped after the defeat of the Presbyterians at Bothwell, and sought refuge for the night in a farmhouse, Morton found himself surrounded with a number of his late companions in arms, when (strange to tell !) instead of receiving him kindly, they resolve to *put him to death*, as a sacrifice to avert the wrath of Heaven, and in revenge for his having thwarted their more violent measures. When this horrid determination is upon the very point of being carried into execution, Claverhouse bursts into the house, and rescues the devoted victim. The risk which he had run from the fanatics, and the report of several acts of generosity which he had performed to the royalists, now secure to Morton the powerful patronage of Claverhouse, who conveys him to Edinburgh, and procures his pardon from the Privy Council, with liberty for him to retire beyond seas. Having arrived in Holland, he is admitted to a private interview with the Prince of Orange, who appoints him to a command in a remote garrison. Some years after the Revolution, he returns to Scotland, and finds the Bellenden family excluded from their property, and Miss Edith on the eve of her marriage to Lord Evandale. He pays a visit to the house of his uncle, who is now dead, and has an interview in a cave with Burley, who is made to be still alive, and whose fanaticism is represented as having issued in the most furious and confirmed derangement. By the time that he returns from these excursions, the author has arranged a plan for removing the impediment that prevented Morton's union with Edith Bellenden, and accordingly Lord Evandale is removed out of the way by one of those violent *coups-de-main* which writers of novels so frequently employ, when they grow weary of their subject, or when they have involved it inadvertently in difficulties, from which they are unable to extricate it with dexterity.

This general outline is at least sufficient to characterise the class to which the tale belongs. It is by no means a story purely fictitious, but is of a mixed kind, and embraces the principal facts in the real history of this country during a very important period. The author has not merely availed himself incidentally of these facts, but they form the groundwork, and furnish the principal materials of his story. He has not taken occasion to make transient allusions to the characters and manners of the age ; but it is the main and avowed object of his work to illustrate these, and to give a genuine and correct picture of the principles and conduct of the two parties into which Scotland was at that time divided. The person who undertakes such a work, subjects himself to laws far more strict than those which bind the ordinary class of fictitious writers. It is not enough that he keep within the bounds of probability,—he must conform to historic truth. If he introduces

real characters, they must feel, and speak, and act as they are described to have done in the faithful page of history, and the author is not at liberty to mould them as he pleases, to make them more interesting, and to give greater effect to his story. The same regard to the truth of history must be observed when fictitious personages are introduced, provided the reader is taught or induced to form a judgment from them of the parties to which they are represented as belonging. If it is permitted to make embellishments on the scene, with the view of giving greater interest to the piece, the utmost care ought to be taken that they do not violate the integrity of character; and they must be impartially distributed, and equally extended to all parties, and to the virtues and vices of each. This is a delicate task, but the undertaker imposes it upon himself, with all its responsibilities. Besides fidelity, impartiality, and judgment, it requires an extensive, and minute, and accurate acquaintance with the history of the period selected, including the history of opinions and habits, as well as of events. And we do not hesitate to say, that this is a species of intelligence which is not likely to be possessed by the person who holds in sovereign contempt the opinions which were then deemed of the utmost moment, and turns with disgust from the very exterior manners of the men whose inmost habits he affects to disclose. Nor will the multifarious reading of the dabbler in everything, from the highest affairs of church and state down to the economy of the kitchen, and the management of the stable, keep him from blundering here at every step.

Such, in our opinion, are the laws of the kind of writing under consideration; and we are not aware that their justice will be disputed, or that our statement of them is open to objection. The work before us we consider as chargeable with offences against these laws, which are neither few nor slight.

The guides of public opinion cannot be too jealous in guarding against the encroachments of the writers of fiction upon the province of true history, nor too faithful in pointing out every transgression, however small it may appear, of the sacred fences by which it is protected. Such writers have it in their power to do much mischief, from the engaging form in which they convey their sentiments to a numerous, and, in general, unsuspecting class of readers. When the scene is laid in a remote and fabulous period, or when the merits and conduct of the men who are made to figure in it do not affect the great cause of truth and of public good, the writer may be allowed to exercise his ingenuity, and to amuse his readers, without our narrowly inquiring whether his representations are historically correct or not. But when he speaks of those men who were engaged in the great struggle for national and individual rights, civil and religious, which took place in this country previous to the Revolution, and of all the cruelties of the oppressors, and all the sufferings of the oppressed, he is not to be tolerated in giving a false and distorted view of men and measures, whether this proceed from ignorance

or from prejudice. Nor should his misrepresentations be allowed to pass without severe reprehension, when their native tendency is to shade the atrocities of persecution, to diminish the horror with which the conduct of a tyrannical and unprincipled government has been so long and so justly regarded, and to traduce and vilify the characters of those men, who, while they were made to feel all the weight of its severity, continued to resist, until they succeeded in emancipating themselves, and securing their posterity from the galling yoke. On this supposition, it is not sufficient to atone for such faults, that the work in which they are found displays great talents ; that it contains scenes which are described with exquisite propriety and truth ; that the leading facts in the history of those times are brought forward ; that the author has condemned the severities of the government ; that he is often in a mirthful and facetious mood ; and that some allowances must be made for a desire to amuse his readers, and to impart greater interest to a story, which, after all, is for the most part fictitious. With every disposition to make all reasonable allowances, we are constrained to set aside such apologies. It is not upon sentiments transiently expressed, but upon the impression which the whole piece is calculated to make, that our judgment must be formed. We cannot agree to sacrifice the interests of truth, either to the humour of an author, or to the amusement of his readers. We respect talents as much as any can do, and can admire them, even when we are obliged to reprobate the bad purposes to which they are applied ; but we must not suffer our imaginations to be dazzled by the splendour of talent ; we cannot consent to be tricked and laughed out of our principles ; nor will we passively allow men who deserve other treatment, and to whose firmness and intrepidity we are indebted for the transmission of so many blessings, to be run down, and abused with profane wit or low buffoonery.

Before proceeding to a particular examination of the characters which the author gives of the two parties, we beg leave to mention one or two instances, which go to show that he is not to be trusted as to the accuracy of the statements upon which his judgments are pronounced. Lest we should be suspected of having hunted for these, we shall take them from the two first paragraphs of his story. One charge which he frequently brings against the strict Presbyterians, is that of a morose and gloomy bigotry, displayed by their censuring of all innocent recreations. This he endeavours to impress on the imagination of his reader in the very first scene, by representing them as refusing, from such scruples, to attend the weaponschaws appointed by government. "The rigour of the strict Calvinists," says he, "increased in proportion to the wishes of the government that it should be relaxed. A supercilious condemnation of all manly pastimes and harmless recreations distinguished those who professed a more than ordinary share of sanctity." Now, with respect to all that kind of information which the antiquary possesses, we will most cheerfully acknowledge the superiority of our

author ; and we can assure him, that we listened to him with "judaical" credulity, and with as devout gravity as any of his readers could listen to the sermons of the zealous Mause, or of Habakkuk Mucklewraith,—while he described, to our great edification, the popinjay or parrot, being the figure of a bird so called, with party-coloured feathers, suspended on a pole or mast, having a yard extended across it as a mark, at which the competitors discharged their fusees and carabines, with the precise number of paces at which they stood from the mark, the exact number of rounds which they fired, and the identical manner in which the order of their rotation was settled. Also the ducal carriage, being an enormous leathern vehicle like to Noah's ark, or at least the vulgar picture of it ; the eight Flanders mares, with their long tails, by which it was dragged ; the eight insides, with their designations and rank, and the places which they occupied on the lateral recess, or the projection at the door, or the boot, and on the opposite ensconce ; and the six outsides, being six lacqueys, armed up to the teeth, who stood, or rather hung, in triple file, on the foot-board, and eke, besides a coachman, three postilions (the author has omitted to mention on which lateral horse they sat, or stood, or hung), with their short swords, and tie-wigs with three tails, and blunderbusses and pistols. Truly, if the rigid features of the Puritans did not relax into something of a more gentle aspect than "a sort of malignant and sarcastic sneer" at the sight of this moving mansion-house, we must grant that they were as morose and gloomy as the author represents them to have been. With respect to all information of this kind, which the author takes every opportunity of imparting to his readers with infinite particularity, and with such evident self-satisfaction as to banish the suspicion that he intended to set the rhapsodical jargon of modern writers over against that of the old Whigs, or to show, that, though the cant of hypocrisy is the worst, the cant of antiquarianism is the most childish and tormenting ;—of the accuracy, we say, of all such information, we never presumed to hesitate for a moment ; we are satisfied, upon his testimony, that in the seventeenth century it was customary for gentlemen of property to sit at the same table with the lowest of their menial servants, though we did not before know that this mode of promiscuous feasting ascended higher in the grade of society than the families of farmers ; and we now believe, upon the same authority, though it cost us, we confess, some pain to swallow it, that clocks or timepieces were then a common article of furniture in a moorland farmhouse. But we must acknowledge that we are not disposed to pay the same deference to the author's opinion, in what relates to the religious sentiments and moral habits of those times ; we presume to think that we understand these fully as well as he does ; and with regard to the scruple which he imputes to the Presbyterians respecting the lawfulness of assemblies for a show of arms, military exercises, and manly pastimes, whether he received his information from pedlars, weavers, and tailors, or from the descendants of honourable

families, right reverend non-juring bishops, lairds, or their hereditary gamekeepers, we can assure him, that they have imposed on his credulity and good-nature (which, if he had had his usual wits about him, he might have suspected from the "shrug of the shoulder" with which they could not help accompanying it), much in the same way that the "travelling packman" imposed upon Oldbuck the antiquary about "the bodle." The fact is, that from the Reformation down to the period in which the scene of this tale is laid, such exercises and pastimes were quite common throughout Scotland; children were carefully trained to them when at school; professors in universities attended and joined in them, as well as their students; and the Presbyterian ministers, having practised them at school and at college, instead of condemning them as unlawful, did not scruple to countenance them with their presence. There were some of these precise preachers, for whom, we suspect, our author (with all his intimate knowledge of such sports) might not have been quite a match in shooting at the popinjay; and in playing with them at the rapier or small-sword, or in wrestling a fall, we are afraid he might have come off as badly as Sergeant Bothwell did from the brawny arms of John Balfour of Burley.

If he had not been eager to fix a stigma upon the Covenanters, he could not have been at a loss to account fully for their absence from the weaponschaws, without having recourse to this religious scruple. In the first place, the troops then kept up by the government in a time of peace were intended to harass the Covenanters, and were wholly employed in discovering and dispersing their conventicles. As one great design of the reviews was to allure young men to enter into this army, we need not wonder that the Covenanters refrained from them, and inculcated this upon all who were under their influence. They refused to enlist, and they refused or scrupled to pay the cess which was appropriated to the support of troops raised for the express purpose of suppressing their religious assemblies. The author, according to his mode of writing and reasoning, should therefore have represented them as of the principle of those fanatics who denied the lawfulness of bearing arms, and of paying taxes for the common purposes of government. If it were necessary to assign any other reason, we might add that the Presbyterians had a religious scruple, but one of a very different complexion from that which is assumed by our author. These reviews, with their attendant sports, were then ordinarily held on Sabbath-days. "Under the reign of the last Stuarts (to avail ourselves in part of the language of our author, in the pretty exordium with which he opens his tale), there was an anxious wish, on the part of government, to counteract, by every means in their power, the strict or puritanical spirit." For this purpose, "frequent musters and assemblies of the people, both for military exercise and for sports and pastimes, were appointed by authority" to be held on the Sabbath. This did not commence after "the republican government." It was the English Solomon who, in his

wisdom, first discovered this project for promoting the happiness of his good subjects. It was revived and pressed with greater zeal in the reign of his son, the pious martyr, Charles I., and again resorted to by his most sacred and immaculate Majesty Charles II. To have stated this circumstance broadly, would have tended to weaken the impression which the author wished to make on the minds of his readers, as to the moroseness and rigidity of the Presbyterians ; and therefore he keeps it back, or rather dexterously veils it. That he was aware of the fact is evident, not only from his charging the Covenanters, in this place, with "a judaical observance of the Sabbath," but also from his telling us, that, if present, they could not avoid "listening to the prayers read in the churches on these occasions."

With what indignation must he have read a late proclamation of the magistrates of this city, enforcing "a judaical observance of the Sabbath!" With what horror must he have viewed the hydra form of Puritanism, which was cut down at Bothwell Bridge in 1679, rearing its deformed head in 1816, and stalking the streets of the capital of Scotland in the shape of its Lord Provost and Magistrates! And, after this, how soothing to his perturbed spirits must have been the spectacle exhibited, so recently and so opportunely on a Sunday, in one of the most public streets of the same city! If he was in the place, and not taking to himself a little innocent pastime in the country, our author doubtless must have been present on that occasion, dancing for joy promiscuously with the rabble assembled, and tripping it to the sound of "the pipe and tabor, or the bagpipe." His good friend, the memorialist of Lord Viscount Dundee, tells us that his politic, as well as valorous hero, found that "his dragoons were the only medicines to be apply'd to their distempers," meaning the old fanatics ; and there was no doubt something peculiarly pleasing in the resemblance (all danger being completely out of the question) between this and the recent incident. This is not the first time that Scotland has been indebted to her faithful and old ally, Russia, for assistance against a gloomy and unsocial fanaticism. General Dalziel was formerly brought from the wilds of Muscovy, as a falcon of the true breed, and trained on the proper ground, to hunt down the flying Puritans, and to drive these impure and loathsome bats into their native dens and caves. And why should not our gallant officers have taken advantage of the presence of a Russian duke, to revive the Sunday weaponschaws of former days, to teach our magistrates good manners, and to convince them that gentlemen in red coats are not bound to be subject to those rigid and puritanical restrictions which may be imposed on the vulgar? We do not know what our author means, and we are not sure that he has himself any distinct idea of what is meant by a judaical observance of the Sabbath. We know of no peculiar strictness on this head exacted by our Presbyterian forefathers, above what is practised by the sober and religious part of the inhabitants of Scotland to this day. And whatever he may be pleased

to think of it, there are many of as enlightened minds, and of as liberal principles, as he can pretend to, who glory in this national distinction ; and one reason why we will not suffer our ancestors to be misrepresented by him, or by any other writer of the present times, is the gratitude which we feel to them, for having transmitted to their posterity a hereditary and deep veneration for the Lord's day.

The second instance which goes to prove that the author's statements respecting the religious sentiments and customs of that period are not to be depended upon, relates to the use of the Book of Common Prayer. "The young at arms," says he, "were unable to avoid *listening to the prayers read in the churches on these occasions*, and thus, in the opinion of their repining parents, meddling with the accursed thing which is an abomination in the sight of the Lord." Now, though the author had not stood in awe of that "dreadful name," which all Christians are taught to venerate, nor been afraid of the threatening, "the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain," we would have thought that he would have at least been careful to save himself from ridicule, by ascertaining the truth of the fact which he assumes as the foundation of his irreverent jest. How, then, does the fact stand? Prayers were NOT *read* in the parish churches of Scotland at that time, any more than they were in the meeting-houses of the indulged, or in the conventicles of the stricter Presbyterians. The author has taken it for granted that the Prayer-Book was introduced into Scotland along with Episcopal government at the Restoration. We are astonished that any one who professed to be acquainted with the history of that period, and especially one who undertakes to describe its religious manners, should take up this erroneous notion. The English Book of Common Prayer was never introduced into Scotland, and, previous to 1637, was used only in the Chapel Royal, and perhaps occasionally in one or two other places, to please the king. The history of the short-lived Scottish Prayer-Book is well known. At the Restoration, neither the one nor the other was imposed, but the public worship was left to be conducted as it had been practised in the Presbyterian Church. Charles II. was not so fond of prayers, whether read or extempore, as to interest himself in that matter ; his maxim was, that Presbyterianism was not fit for a gentleman ; his dissipated and irreligious courtiers were of the same opinion ; and therefore Episcopacy was established. As for the aspiring churchmen who farthured and pressed the change, they were satisfied with seating themselves in their rich bishoprics. Accordingly, the author will not find the Presbyterians "repining" at this imposition ; and had he examined their writings, as he ought to have done, he would have found them repeatedly admitting that they had no such grievance. But surely (we hear some of our readers who have perused *Old Mortality*, exclaim), surely the Prayer-Book must have been read in the churches in those times. The old steward of Tillietudlem is as familiar with the *commination*, as the most conscientious curate in England

could be ; and the butler is as well acquainted with the Litany, as if he had heard it every Sunday, Wednesday, and Friday. (Vol. ii. pp. 40, 267.) Cuddie Headrigg, too, very wittily observes, that this, in his opinion, formed the only difference between the Episcopalian service and that of their opponents. (Saame volume, sievint chapter, hunder an' fifty-saxt page.) Honest Major Bellenden also vouches for the fact, and introduces it when he was very much in earnest to procure the life of Henry Morton. "He is a lad of as good church principles as any gentleman in the life-guards. He has gone to church service with me fifty times, and I never heard him miss one of the responses in my life. Edith Bellenden can bear witness to it as well as I. He always read on the same prayer-book with her, and could look out the lessons as well as the curate himself." (Vol. ii. pp. 303, 304.) Nay, to confirm the truth of the fact, in spite of all evidence to the contrary, Morton was so habituated to the use of the Liturgy, that, in a situation of great distraction, "he had instinctively recourse to the petition for deliverance and for composure of spirit which is to be found in the Book of Common Prayer of the Church of England ;" a circumstance which so enraged his murderers, that they determined to precipitate his fate. (Vol. iv. pp. 83, 84).

There is one fault in the work, which all who have carefully read it must have observed. For the sake of giving effect to a particular scene, the author does not hesitate to violate historic truth and probability, and even to contradict his own statements or admissions. Instances of this occur in some of his best descriptions, and they show, that though he has the imagination and feeling of a poet, he is deficient in the judgment and discriminating taste of a historian. For example, at the weaponschaw, with which the story is introduced, he makes the Whigs to shout repeatedly at Morton's success, and cry, "The good old cause for ever !" although every one acquainted with the state of matters at that time, must be persuaded that this would have been a signal for the soldiers to disperse the crowd, and perhaps to shoot some of the offenders instantly on the spot. No part of the character of Burley will remove the gross improbability, that a man in his circumstances would have engaged in a personal conflict with a soldier in an inn, which, in all likelihood, must have issued in his imprisonment, and consequently in his detection. We mention these instances because, as related by the author, they do not convey any degrading reflection on the character of the Covenanters, but, so far as they go, exhibit them in a favourable light ; and therefore we cannot be suspected of partiality in pointing them out as blemishes. Mause is a favourite character with the author, and out of her mouth he intended to pour the greatest quantity of his ridicule upon the Covenanters. Here, then, we might have expected consistency. But how does the case stand ? Mause was an old professor of religion, and also an old residenter on the estate of Tillietudlem. She had long attended conventicles, but she had conducted herself

quietly, and prudently, and inoffensively ; for, had she done otherwise, the zealous lady Margaret Bellenden, who was accustomed to visit her, and to gossip with her for half an hour at a time, must have long before discovered her principles and character. But no sooner does she fall under the management of our author, than she becomes all at once frenzied, and having lost the command of herself, and being wholly possessed by the fanatical spirit of the tale, she not only incurs the wrath of the old lady with whom she had been "a sort of favourite," but by her wild and uncontrollable raving, expels herself and son from every harbour, and exposes all who were so unfortunate as to receive her, to the greatest distress and peril. What must we infer from this incongruous and conflicting representation ? That the conduct of the discreet Mause, previous to "the 5th of May 1679, when our narrative commences," exhibits the genuine picture of the Presbyterian character, as it existed at that period, and the description of her mad behaviour after that period, is the distorted caricature of the same class of persons as now presented in *Old Mortality* ?

"Nec melius natura queat variasse colores :
En tibi vera rosa est, en tibi ficta rosa !"

But as we are not yet to part with our author, and would wish to keep in the best terms possible with him so long as we must be together, we shall suspend the discussion of the points on which we are under the necessity of differing from him, for the sake of performing the more pleasant duty of pointing out some of his beauties. These are numerous ; and all the blemishes which we have noticed, and may yet find ourselves obliged to notice, could not prevent us from observing and admiring them. It is true, that when great talents are abused, when they are exerted to confound the distinctions between virtue and vice, to varnish over oppression and injustice, and to throw ridicule upon those who resist these scourges of society, they ought not to screen the possessor from condemnation and censure. He is doubly criminal ; he sins in patronising a bad cause ; and he sins in prostituting to its support those talents which, by the very law of his nature, he was bound to use for an opposite purpose. Still we cannot be blind to their existence, nor would we wish to overlook one instance in which they are legitimately and laudably employed. That the general tendency of the work under consideration is unfavourable to the interests of religion and political freedom, is our decided judgment. But we, at the same time, cheerfully acknowledge, that in stating his own sentiments, the author has distinctly condemned persecution, tyranny, and military oppression ; and although he has laboured to expose that party who were most distinguished for religion and correctness of manners, and among whom, indeed, these virtues were then almost exclusively to be found, yet we are unwilling, simply on that account, to consider him as an enemy to religion, or a champion of profaneness. But whatever the

moral and religious character of the work be, its literary merits are unquestionably high. The author always views nature with the eye of a poet, and his descriptions of it are uniformly vivid, strong, and picturesque. His dialogue is easy, animated, and characteristical, and is often enlivened with strokes of genuine humour, and flashes of true wit. We cannot say that we find those profound views of human nature, and those nicer dissections of the human heart, which appear in the characters of the masters of fictitious writing who flourished during last century. They had studied mankind with a philosophic eye; their object was to delineate men and manners as they occurred in ordinary life; and their chief art was exerted in inventing scenes in which these might be fully unfolded, and in forming them into one piece of historical painting, in which variety was combined with unity, and the deepest interest imparted to the subject, without the smallest violation of the limits of nature and probability. Our author, again, has surveyed mankind, not carelessly indeed, but with a curious rather than a philosophic eye; he is attracted by the singularities and eccentricities of human character; he endeavours chiefly to amuse his readers with an exhibition of these; and whenever they have fallen within the reach of his observation, and he was under no temptation to distort, he has described them with uncommon, we might say with inimitable truth, naïveté, and effect. He never fails to "carry every point," when he brings on the scene a Highland chieftain, a moss-trooper, an astrologer, or even a dwarf; a cunning publican, a simple clown, an artful waiting-woman, or a whimsical old housekeeper. The character of Neil Bane is painted to the life. The scene in the public-house is well described; and the character of Sergeant Bothwell is natural, and supported throughout,—only, we must observe that, from his education and former rank, he is not a fair specimen of the rude and brutal soldiery let loose upon the Covenanters; and he always takes care to engross the conversation, and scarcely allows his comrades to show their faces. The shrewdness and worldly sense of Cuddie Headrigg are very amusing; and we must praise the sagacity of the author in keeping him cheek by jowl to his mother, not to keep her within bounds (for his presence is of little service that way), but to divert the reader's attention, and keep him from wearying of a character that is overcharged and unnatural. In general, we think that the author is most successful in giving the portraits of those in low life. Here he has, almost in every case, produced a *fac-simile*; so that we may justly apply the following lines, in which Martial praises the portrait of Issa, the favourite lap-dog of his friend Publius:—

"In qua tam similem videbis Issam,
 Ut sit tam similis sibi nec ipsa.
 Issam denique pone cum tabella,
 Aut utramque putabis esse veram,
 Aut utramque putabis esse fictam."

So true the likeness of the elf,
 That liker is not Issa's self.
 Survey together, then apart,
 The dog of nature and of art ;
 You'll think that both the dogs are real,
 Or both alike are dogs ideal.

On the score of common propriety, we must except the description of Goose Gibbie in the first scene. We are quite sensible that the author found it advisable to make some sacrifice of his taste to that of a large class of his readers, whom it was prudent to please ; but it was surely too much to record, with such tedious minuteness, and such marks of delight, the adventures and misfortune of a poor "half-witted lad," similar to those who give "infinite satisfaction" to thoughtless school-boys, gaping clowns, and giggling handmaidens.

One conspicuous fault in this tale lies in its not giving a view of the state of the Presbyterians previous to the time that it commences, and of the sufferings which they had endured from the Government. It begins with an account of the assassination of Archbishop Sharp, and of the insurrection of the Presbyterians ; but it throws no light upon the causes which drove them to this extremity. Let them have been as fanatical, and violent, and rancorous in their political hatred, as the author represents them, still, common justice, not to speak of candour, required that the reader should have been put in possession of those facts which were of an excusatory nature, or which would enable him to judge how far these vices were inherent in the Presbyterian character, and to what degree they were to be imputed to the oppression and cruelty with which they had been treated. The necessity of this is so exceedingly obvious, that it is difficult to suppress the suspicion that the information was intentionally kept back. We certainly do consider it as an instance of glaring partiality and injustice,—the more so, as a great proportion of the readers of the work know little more of the history of that time, beyond what they have found in the Introduction to Walter Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, where it is described by the very elegant periphrasis of "what is called the 'Persecution.'" It is no apology for this, that the author has, in a general statement, opposed the tyranny of the Government and military violence, to the turbulence and fanaticism of the Covenanters ; for he has dwelt upon the latter, and only glanced at the former in a transient manner. What would we think of a writer who should undertake the history of a civil war, without giving the causes which led to it, leaving his reader to collect these from other works, or to guess at them from the hints which he occasionally dropt ? We are not so unreasonable as to require that our author should have alarmed his readers by giving a dry narration of this at the beginning of his work, or by substituting it in place of the interesting description of the weaponschaw ;—far from it. But none knows better than he where it could have been introduced with the greatest propriety and effect. Had he only introduced the leading

facts in a conversation between Morton and a rational Presbyterian (if such a personage could have entered into the author's conception), he might have given a higher tone to his work, and invested his nominal hero with the real character of a patriot, instead of making him a mere everyday person of romance—a puppet, alternately agitated by love, and jealousy, and personal resentment, and a vague and feeble wish for fame. The narrative which we are necessitated to give, to supply the author's omission, can be but brief and general.

During *nineteen* long years previous to the insurrection at Bothwell, the Presbyterians of Scotland had smarted under the rod of persecution. Scarcely was Charles II. restored, when the scaffold was dyed with the blood of the noble Marquess of Argyll, who had placed the crown on the king's head, and of James Guthrie, whose loyalty, not of that passive, creeping, senseless kind which Cavaliers and Tories glory in, but enlightened, tempered, and firm, was proved by his refusing, during the whole period of the interregnum, to acknowledge either the Commonwealth or the Protectorate. The people of Scotland were deeply rooted in their attachment to Presbytery, from a persuasion of its agreeableness to Scripture, from experience of the advantages, religious and civil, which it had produced, from the oaths which they were under to adhere to it, and from the sufferings which they had endured for their adherence to it, both from the court and from the sectaries of England. Upon the Restoration a proclamation was sent down to Scotland, in which the king promised to preserve this form of church government in that part of his dominions. But this was merely an artifice to lull the nation asleep, until the court had gained over or got rid of the principal persons whose opposition they had reason to fear, and to prevent the general remonstrances which otherwise would have been presented from all parts of the kingdom against the intended change; for it is beyond all doubt (whatever ignorance may assert to the contrary), that there was not then a party in Scotland, worthy of being named, which desired the restoration of Episcopacy upon religious principle. Accordingly, when the Parliament met, being packed by the court, and slavishly submissive to all its wishes, it proceeded to declare the king supreme in all causes, ecclesiastical and civil, to devolve upon him the whole right of settling the government of the Church, to condemn all resistance to the royal authority, and at one stroke to rescind all the Parliaments from 1640 to 1650, even those at which his Majesty and his father had been present, and all their acts, including many of the most enlightened and salutary which ever passed a Scottish legislature! Thus the liberties of the nation, civil and religious, were laid at the feet of the monarch, and the foundations of all legitimate government shaken. "This," says Bishop Burnet, "was a most extravagant act, and only fit to be concluded after a drunken bout. It shook all possible security for the future, and laid a most pernicious precedent. It was a mad roaring time, full of extravagance. And no wonder it was so, when *the men of*

affairs were almost perpetually drunk." Had not the ancient spirit of Scotland been broken by repeated disasters, and had they not been basely betrayed, the nation would have risen at once, bound this mad crew, and thrown off the degrading yoke which was imposed on them. In the exercise of the powers with which he was invested, the king immediately restored Episcopacy by a royal edict, which was soon after confirmed by another Parliament. One principal cause of this revolution, and of all the confusions, horrors, and crimes which it entailed upon the nation during twenty-eight years, was the base and unparalleled treachery of Sharp, who, having been sent to London by the Presbyterians to watch over their interests, and supported there by their money, deluded them in his letters by the most solemn assurances of his fidelity, and of the security of their cause, while he had betrayed that cause, and sold himself to their adversaries; and who continued to practise the same consummate hypocrisy, until he had no longer any reason for concealment, and he took possession of the archbishopric of St Andrews. All the authority and all the force of Government were henceforth employed almost solely in enforcing subjection to a form of church government, and to an order of men that were odious to the nation. The Solemn League and Covenant, which was regarded with the greatest veneration, and had long been considered as one of the most sacred bonds of security for the national religion and liberties, was declared by statute unlawful, and all the subjects, as well as the king who had sworn it, were absolved from its obligation; those who were admitted to places of power and trust were obliged explicitly to renounce it; and this renunciation soon came to be exacted from the subjects in general under the heaviest penalties. All ministers who had been admitted to parishes after 1649, were ordered, before a certain day, to receive collation from the bishops, or else to leave their churches. In consequence of this, between three and four hundred of them were constrained to leave their charges, which were filled with men who were in general the very *dregs and refuse of society*. In giving them this character, we use the language, a little softened, of a bishop who was at that time in Scotland, and was a writer in support of Episcopacy. "They were," says he, "generally very mean and despicable in all respects. They were the worst preachers ever I heard: they were ignorant to a reproach; and many of them were openly vicious. They were a disgrace to their orders, and to the sacred functions; and were indeed the dregs and refuse of the northern parts. Those of them who arose above contempt or scandal, were men of such violent tempers, that they were as much hated as the others were despised." Who can wonder that such men were despised and detested? Who but hypocritical infidels, and profligates, and dastardly souls, would have submitted to the ministry of such men, or have abandoned their own ministers, who had been highly respected, and were highly respectable? Accordingly, such of the people as had any sense of religion, or of decorum, and were not slaves to the court, or to

deep prejudice, scrupled to hear the curates, and frequented the churches of those Presbyterian ministers who had not yet been ejected. When this was not in their power, they craved instruction from their ejected pastors, who, considering the relation that had subsisted between them and their flocks as not dissolved, complied with their request, at first privately, and afterwards more publicly. This was the origin of separate meetings and conventicles, against which the vengeance of the Government, and of the bishops and their worthless underlings, was now directed.

Laws with penalties, which were gradually increased, were enacted, and every person bearing the king's commission had the power of executing them. The Parliament had granted to the king a standing army, under the pretext of defending Christendom against the Turks, forsooth, but in reality to support his arbitrary government. The soldiers were dispersed in companies through the nonconforming parishes. The curate read over a catalogue of his parishioners on the Sabbath-day, and having marked the names of such as were absent, gave them in to the person who commanded the company, who immediately levied the fines incurred by the absentees. In parishes to which the nonconformists were suspected to repair, the soldiers used to spend the Sabbath in the nearest inn, and when warned by the psalm that public worship was drawing to a close, they sallied out from their cups, placed themselves at the doors of the church, told the people, as they came out, like a flock of sheep, and seized as their prey upon such as had wandered from their own parishes. Ministers who had preached at conventicles were, when apprehended, committed to prison, and banished; those who attended their ministry were severely fined, or subjected to corporal punishment. Masters were obliged to enter into bonds that their servants should not attend these meetings, and landlords to come under these engagements for all that lived on their estates. If any dispute arose respecting the fines, the person accused was obliged to travel from the most distant part of the country, and though found innocent, was often obliged to pay what was called *riding-money*, for defraying the travelling expenses of his accuser, who accompanied him.

Sir James Turner, who commanded a troop which lay at Dumfries in 1666, had distinguished himself by his military exactions and plunder. A small party of his soldiers were one day ordered to a small village in Galloway to bring in one of their victims. While they were treating him in the most inhuman manner, some countrymen ventured to remonstrate against their cruelty. This was resented by the soldiers, a scuffle ensued, and the soldiers were put to flight. Knowing that this act would draw on them the vengeance of the military, the countrymen, being joined by numbers who could not but applaud their generous interference, disarmed the soldiers who were in the neighbourhood, and proceeding quickly to Dumfries, took Sir James Turner prisoner, and dispersed his troops. This incident produced the rising of the Presby-

terians in the west of Scotland, which was suppressed at Pentland Hills by the King's troops under General Dalziel. How far it was prudent for them to continue in arms, and to brave the fury of the Government, in the circumstances in which they were then placed, we shall not judge ; but that they were chargeable with rebellion, we will not easily admit. "We leave all those who afterwards thought it lawful to join in the Revolution," says a sensible English author, who wrote *Memoirs of the Church of Scotland*, "and in taking arms against the oppressions and arbitrary government of King James, to judge, whether these good men had not the same individual reasons, and more, for this Pentland expedition ? and it is answer enough to all that shall read these sheets to say, that these men died for that lawful resisting of arbitrary power which has been justified as legal, and acknowledged to be justifiable by the practice and declaration of the respective Parliaments of both kingdoms."

An unsuccessful attempt to throw off a tyrannical yoke, serves in general to rivet it more firmly, and to aggravate the sufferings of the oppressed. It was so in the present instance. Besides those who suffered for being engaged in the late insurrection, the nonconformists throughout the kingdom were prosecuted with the greatest rigour. A *bone of contention*, to use the phrase of their arch-persecutor, was thrown in among them by the royal acts of *Indulgence*, as they were called, by which a certain number of the ejected ministers were permitted to preach upon certain conditions, and were confined by twos, like galley-slaves, within their parishes. Upon this, severer laws were enacted against conventicles. To preach at a separate meeting in a private house, subjected the minister to a fine of 5000 merks ; if he preached in the fields, his punishment was death and confiscation of property. The fines of those who countenanced these meetings were increased, and were proportioned to their wealth. For example, Sir George Maxwell of Newark, and Sir George Maxwell of Nether Pollock, were fined in a sum amounting to nearly £8000 sterling each, in the course of three years, for absence from their parish church, attendance on conventicles, and disorderly baptisms. Landlords were now obliged to make it an article in their leases, and masters in their indentures, that their tenants and apprentices should regularly attend the established place of worship. Recourse was at last had to one of the most detestable measures of a tyrannical government. *Letters of intercommuning* were issued against a great number of the most distinguished Presbyterians, including several ladies of rank, by which they were proscribed as rebels, and cut off from all society ; a price, amounting in some instances to £500, was fixed on their heads, and every person, not excepting their nearest relatives, was prohibited from conversing with them by word or writing, from receiving or harbouring them, and from supplying them with meat, drink, clothes, or any of the accommodations or necessities of life, under the pain of being pursued with rigour as

guilty of the same crimes with the persons intercommuned. It is to be observed, that the highest offence of those who were thus excluded from the pale of society, was preaching at, or attending field conventicles. At the same time, the *Highland host* was brought down upon the western counties. Those who have heard of modern Highland hospitality, or been amused with fables of ancient Highland chivalry, can form no idea of the horror produced by the irruption of these *savages*, to the number of 10,000, armed, besides their accustomed weapons, with spades, shovels, and mattocks, and with daggers or dirks made to fasten to the muzzles of their guns, iron shackles for binding their prisoners, and thumb-locks to oblige them to answer the questions that they proposed to them, and to discover their concealed treasure. The rapine and outrage committed by this lawless banditti, often without discrimination of conformists from nonconformists, having obliged the Government to order them home, the regular troops were sent to replace them, provided with instructions to proceed with the greatest severity against those who attended conventicles, and headed by officers who had shown themselves best qualified for carrying these instructions into execution.

We cannot give an account of the sufferings which the Presbyterians endured by the execution of these barbarous measures. "They suffered," says an author already quoted, "extremities that tongue cannot describe, and which heart can hardly conceive of, from the dismal circumstances of hunger, nakedness, and the severity of the climate,—lying in damp caves, and in hollow clefts of the naked rocks, without shelter, covering, fire or food : none durst harbour, entertain, relieve, or speak to them, upon pain of death. Many, for venturing to receive them, were forced to fly to them, and several put to death for no other offence. Fathers were persecuted for supplying their children, and children for nourishing their parents ; husbands for harbouring their wives, and wives for cherishing their own husbands. The ties and obligations of the laws of nature were no defence, but it was made death to perform natural duties ; and many suffered death for acts of piety and charity in cases where human nature could not bear the thoughts of suffering it. To such an extreme was the rage of these persecutors carried." Nor can we give an account of the murders committed under the cloak of justice ; the inhuman tortures to which the accused were subjected, to constrain them to bear witness against themselves, their relatives, and their brethren, and the barbarity of sounding drums on the scaffold to drown their voices, and of apprehending and punishing those who expressed sympathy for them, or who uttered the prayer, *God comfort you !* The number of prisoners was often so great that the Government could not bring them all to trial. Such of them as escaped execution were transported, or rather sold as slaves, to people desolate and barbarous colonies ; the price of a Whig was fixed at five pounds ; and sometimes they were given away in presents by the judges.

Such was the state of matters at the period when the story before us is supposed to commence. Had the author been obliged to prefix to it a narrative of these transactions, however general, we do not believe that he would have ventured on bringing forward the representation which he has given of the two parties, or that he would have presumed on its meeting with a favourable reception. What person of judgment and candour will condemn the Covenanters, or say that they acted otherwise than it became men of conscience, integrity, and spirit to act? Men who had been betrayed, insulted, harassed, pillaged, and treated in every way like beasts rather than reasonable creatures; and by whom? by a perfidious, profane, profligate junto of atheists and debauchees, who were not fit for governing even a colony of transported felons, aided by a set of churchmen the most despicable and worthless that ever disgraced the habit which they wore, or profaned the sacred function in which they impiously dared to officiate. Were these sufferers the men whom a writer of the nineteenth century would have chosen as the butt of his ridicule, by industriously bringing forward and aggravating their foibles, and by loading them with follies and vices to which they were utter strangers, while he eagerly sought to shade the cruelties which they endured, and to throw a lustre over the character of their worst persecutors? Who, after contemplating the picture which the genuine history of these times presents, can read without scorn the pitiful complaint, that “the zeal of the conventiclers devoured no small portion of their loyalty, sober sense, and good breeding?” We have more respect for him, when with greater courage he avows his sentiments, and bears his testimony against “the envenomed rancour of their political hatred.” For then we can tell him boldly in reply, that the Government, or rather the political faction usurping the government, which the Presbyterians hated, deserved to be “hated with a *perfect* hatred.” Indignant as we felt at such conduct, we could not prevent our features from relaxing, to hear him exclaim, with affected whining, and glaring self-contradiction,—in the language of tragedy, too,—

“Oh rake not up the ashes of our fathers!”

Your fathers! If you mean the Presbyterians, they acknowledge you not; and if their persecutors, *you* only are to blame for the stirring of those ashes with which time was gradually and slowly covering the memory of their infamous deeds.

If the Presbyterian preachers, and the people who faithfully and generously adhered to them—after being driven out of society, hunted from place to place, obliged to assemble on mountains, and to seek refuge in the caves and dens of the earth—had unlearned in a great degree the ordinary habits of men, and almost forgotten to speak the common language of their contemporaries;—if the scenes with which they were daily surrounded had imparted to their minds a high degree of enthusiasm, and even of fierceness;—in short, if the picture drawn

by the author of the more rigid Presbyterians were just (which we can by no means admit), still a faithful and intelligent historian would not only have fairly accounted for this, but would have painted their native sense, worth, and dignity of character, as displaying itself through the darker and less pleasing, but not uninteresting hue, which peculiar circumstances had for a time impressed upon their features. Who will wonder that some of them should at times have lost command of themselves, and done acts which did not accord with their general conduct and prevailing temper? When the oppression of the times became so indiscriminate, both in point of legal enactment and of actual execution, as to involve many others along with the immediate objects of persecution, and when it assumed so outrageous a form as to irritate all who had any regard for the rights of men, or any abhorrence of tyranny, need we wonder that many persons, who, in point of religious and moral character, were dissimilar to the Covenanters, should have been induced to attend their conventicles, and to take part in their quarrel? Or need we be astonished that instruments should have been found to cut off so furious a persecutor, and a man so universally detested, as Archbishop Sharp? Instead of being surprised at the insurrection of the Presbyterians, and the resistance which they made at Drumclog and Bothwell, may we not rather feel astonished that their patience held out so long under such intolerable oppressions? To those who would revive the exploded charge of rebellion, we give the same answer which we made in speaking of the rising at Pentland, and in the words of the same author whom we then quoted: "What a shame is it to us," says he, addressing the English nation, "and how much to the honour of these persecuted people, that they could thus see the treachery and tyranny of those reigns, when we saw it not; or rather, that they had so much honesty of principle, and obeyed so strictly the dictates of conscience, as to bear their testimony, early, nobly, and gloriously, to the truth of God, and the rights of their country, both civil and religious! while we all, though seeing the same things, and equally convinced of its being right, yet betrayed the cause of liberty and religion, by a sinful silence, and a dreadful cowardice, not joining to help the Lord, or the people of the Lord, against the mighty; sitting still, and seeing our brethren slaughtered and butchered, in defence of their principles (which our consciences told us, *even then*, were founded on the truth), and by those tyrants who, we knew, deserved to be rejected, both of God and the nation, and whom afterwards we did reject!"

We now proceed to substantiate the charge which we have brought against the work, by adducing particular proofs, *first*, of partiality to the persecutors; and, *secondly*, of injustice to the persecuted Presbyterians. And as we do not mean to blink the charge, we wish to be understood as accusing the work of *gross* partiality and injustice.

In the *first* place, then, it gives an unfaithful picture of the sufferings which the country endured from military depredations and outrage.

The history of that period is full of instances of these ; and the author was not only sensible that he was bound to give a view of them, but has professed to give it. But how faint a resemblance does the picture bear to the original ! We shall consider the scene at Tillietudlem, on occasion of Claverhouse's first visit to it, when we examine the character of that officer. The scene at Milnwood, when Henry Morton is taken prisoner, is the only one in the work which could properly be intended to represent the depredations of the soldiery, and is evidently given by the author as a specimen of the whole. (Vol. ii. p. 172-207.) But here every circumstance is so arranged, as to diminish the impression which the reader might have conceived of the excesses committed on such occasions. Great alarm is indeed expressed at the arrival of the red-coats, but it is by the miserly landlord and his timid housekeeper. Old Milnwood slips into his pocket the silver spoons,—but the soldiers testify no disposition either to pilfer or plunder. The troopers call for drink with sufficient insolence,—but the jests of the thoughtless and gay, though dissipated Bothwell, dispel the apprehensions of the reader, who is mightily pleased to see the claret of the old miser quaffed, and his musty bottles emptied. Bothwell determines to carry off young Morton as a prisoner, but it is only after discovering that he had afforded shelter to the murderer of the archbishop ; and although he asserted that he was not aware of the commission of that deed, still his assertion was not sufficient warrant for the sergeant to allow him to escape. Bothwell proceeds to put the test oath, but we are instantly told that he did it much in the same manner “which is used to this day in his Majesty's custom-house.” And before we have recalled our thoughts, the author has completely diverted our attention from the subject, by the struggle between Mause and her son, and the ridiculous, extravagant, and raving rhapsodies with which the former assailed the astounded ears of the soldiers. In short, the party carry off Henry Morton, leaving the impression upon our minds that they had conducted themselves with great moderation, and disposing us to join heartily in the reproaches which the incensed housekeeper pours upon the head of Mause, as the sole cause of the misfortune that had befallen the family. Thus the tragic scenes of military violence, described by the faithful page of history, sink, in the mimic representation of our author, into a mere farce ! And the moral of the fable, good reader, if it be necessary to state it more plainly, is, that the evils which the Covenanters suffered from the soldiers were chiefly owing to their own indiscretion and extravagance. In the midst of this scene, so calculated to give a false idea of the then actual state of matters, the attentive reader could not fail to observe the mean attempt made to bribe him to think lightly of the whole persecution, by putting a laughable and ludicrous description of the sufferings of the Covenanters into the mouth of old Mause.

“ Accipe nunc Danaum insidias, et crimine ab uno
Disce omnes.”

In the *second* place, we bring the same charge against the representation made of the judicial procedure against the Covenanters. We allude particularly to the torture of Macbriar in the presence of the Privy Council. The use of that infernal mode of punishment at that period is so well known, that it could scarcely have been omitted, and it afforded, besides, an opportunity to the author to display his powers of description. We readily allow that the operation, and the behaviour of the counsellors who witnessed the spectacle, are described in such a manner as to excite our horror at both. But what we complain of is, that even here the author has introduced a circumstance which is calculated most materially to diminish this feeling. As if the Privy Council had not been in the habit of torturing innocent men, the person selected as an example of their unfeeling severity, is not simply a Covenanter, a field-preacher, and one who had been in the rebellion at Bothwell ; but one whom the author had previously made a murderer, and one of the most atrocious kind,—we say a murderer, because his intention was fully manifested, and on the eve of being carried into execution, and because “the bitterness of death was past” with the victim, before he was rescued. (Vol. iv. p. 68-100.) Macbriar is made to act a principal part in that horrid scene (more horrid by far than that of the torture), and the description of it is wrought up to the very highest pitch of which the author’s fancy was capable.¹ Both scenes were of his creation. It will scarcely be denied, that in forming the one, he had his eye upon the other ; and the tendency of the association upon the mind of the reader is too obvious to require illustration.

A *third* instance of partiality to the persecutors, is the excessive tenderness and delicacy shown to the Episcopal clergy, contrasted with the manner in which the Presbyterian ministers are treated through the work. It is most undeniable that they acted a very important part in the transactions of that period ; yet they are concealed and kindly kept out of view by the author. Preachers of the Presbyterian persuasion, both indulged, and non-indulged, moderate and rigid, are brought forward by name ; the reader is introduced to their acquaintance, and made to listen to their conversations, and prayers, and preachings. But not one bishop or curate is introduced on the scene, and we seldom even hear of

¹ The scene here referred to is that at Drumshinnel, when Morton, having fallen among some of the Cameronian party, was adjudged to die, “as an offering to atone for the sins of the congregation,” as soon as the clock struck twelve on Sabbath night, and was opportunely saved from this fate by the arrival of Claverhouse and his dragoons. The author informs us, in the notes to his last edition of the Tales, that the incident was suggested to him by a similar story about a gang of smugglers. Allowing that such a scene *might* have taken place with some of the Covenanters, and that Sir Walter was fully warranted, as he insists in his vindictory articles, in drawing such a picture

of some of the wilder spirits who mingled with their ranks, it was quite preposterous to put such bloody sentiments into the mouth of any of their ministers, and especially of Macbriar, who is evidently intended for Mr M’Kail, one of the most amiable sufferers of the period. But the worst feature in the whole scene is the attempt to gloze over the horrid massacre which followed,—the reader being fully prepared, by the previous scene in the drama, for welcoming the approach of “the Bloody Claverse,” and feeling anything but sympathy when he sees that “the Cameronians, so lately about to be the willing agents of a bloody execution, were now themselves to undergo it.”

them, except when we are told of their being religiously employed in *reading prayers* ! What is the reason of this ? The reader may take the following until he can find a better. The gross ignorance of the greater part of them, the vices with which their morals were stained, and the violence with which they instigated the Government to persecution, were so glaring as to be undeniable. The character given of them by Presbyterian writers is so strongly confirmed by Bishop Burnet, that it was impossible to outface it ; and to have presented them in their true colours, would not only have displeased the right reverend friends and informers of the author, but would also have tended, in no small degree, to have relieved the dark picture given of the Covenanters. We do not recollect to have seen prudence enumerated among the qualifications of a historian, but henceforward let it occupy a chief place among the historic virtues.

“Cave arguendum facinus hoc, lector, putes :
Causam rogas ? Probanda virtus omnis est ;
Ergo et probanda (quis neget ?) prudentia.”

We now come to the character of Grahame of Claverhouse, afterwards known by the name of Viscount Dundee, which the author has laboured with the greatest art. Claverhouse was not in Scotland at the beginning of the persecution, but he had been employed in it as the captain of an independent troop at least two years before the affair of Drumclog. His behaviour soon recommended him to his employers. Officers not distinguished for humanity, and sufficiently disposed to execute the orders which they received with rigour, had been previously employed by the Court. But the deeds of Turner, Bannatyne, Grierson of Lagg, and General Dalziel, were soon eclipsed by those of Grahame, who long continued to be known in Scotland by the name of *Bloody Claverhouse*. His actions, as recorded in the history of these times, do certainly prove that he was not undeserving of this appellation. A brief reference to some of these will assist us in judging of the character which the author has given of him. We shall not speak of the blood wantonly shed by him in the pursuit of the Covenanters after their rout at Bothwell, nor of the ravages and cruelties which he committed in Ayrshire and in Galloway, during that and the succeeding year ; as it may be alleged that revenge for the disgrace which he had suffered at Loudon Hill, prompted him to acts not congenial to his natural disposition. But this feeling had sufficient time to subside before 1684. During that year he had the chief command in the west of Scotland, and he employed the most disgraceful and barbarous measures to discover those that were intercommuned, and if possible to exterminate the whole party. He sought out and employed persons who could, with the greatest address, feign themselves to be pious men, and friendly to Presbyterians, and by this means discovered their retreats, or drew them from places where they could not be attacked by his troops. Having divided the country

into districts, he caused his soldiers to drive all the inhabitants of a district, like so many cattle, to a convenient place. He then called out a certain number of them, and while his soldiers surrounded them with charged guns and bloody threatenings, he made them swear that they owned the Duke of York as rightful successor to the throne. If they had formerly taken the test or abjuration oath, he interrogated them if they had repented of this, and then caused them to swear anew that they would not, under pain of losing their part in heaven, repent of it for the future. If any hesitated to swear, he was taken out a few paces from the rest, his face was covered with a napkin, and the soldiers ordered to fire over his head, to terrify him into compliance. At other times, he gathered together all the children of a district, from six to ten years of age, and having drawn up a party of soldiers before them, told them to pray, as they were going to be shot. When they were sufficiently frightened, he ordered them their lives, provided they answered such questions as he proposed to them concerning their fathers, and such as visited their houses. Claverhouse scrupled not to take an active part in these disgraceful scenes, so far as to fire his own pistol twice over the head of a boy of nine years of age, to induce him to discover his father. He frequently shot those who fell into his power, though they were unarmed, without any form of trial; and when his soldiers, sometimes shocked at the wantonness of his cruelty, hesitated in obeying his orders, he executed them himself. The case of John Brown, in the parish of Muirkirk, affords an example of this kind. He was a man of excellent character, and no way obnoxious to Government, except for nonconformity. On the 1st of May 1684 he was at work in the fields near to his own house, when Claverhouse passed, on his way from Lesmahago, with three troops of dragoons. It is probable that information of his nonconformity had been given to the colonel, who caused him to be brought from the fields to his own door, and, after some interrogatories, ordered him to be instantly shot. Brown, being allowed a few minutes to prepare for death, prayed in such an affecting strain, that none of the soldiers, profane and hardened as they were, could be prevailed upon to fire, upon which Claverhouse, irritated at the delay, shot him dead with his own hand, regardless of the tears and entreaties of the poor man's wife, who, far gone in her pregnancy, and attended by a young child, stood by. The afflicted widow could not refrain from upbraiding the murderer, and telling him, that he must give an account to God for what he had done; to which the hardened and remorseless villain proudly replied,—“*To man I can be answerable, and as for God, I will take him into my own hand.*” The apologists of Claverhouse have been obliged to notice the fact of his becoming the executioner of his own sentences, in the exercise of military discipline. But, with their usual fertility in inventing excuses for his most glaring faults, and with their wonted ignorance of human nature, they impute such

deeds of cold-blooded severity to a desire on his part to do honour to the individuals on whom the punishment was inflicted! Thus Dalrymple, after telling us that the only punishment which Claverhouse inflicted was death, and that all other punishments, in his opinion, disgraced a gentleman, states, that a young man having fled in the time of battle, he brought him to the front of the army, and saying that "a gentleman's son ought not to fall by the hands of a common executioner," shot him with his own pistol. Those who recollect the case of poor Brown, who was neither a soldier nor a gentleman, will know how to treat this absurd and ridiculous allegation.

The most hardened and irreligious persecutors do not always feel, upon reflection, that ease of mind which they affect. It is said that Claverhouse acknowledged to some of his confidential friends, that Brown's prayer often intruded on his unwelcome thoughts; and it is not improbable that some degree of remorse at his late deed made him show an unwonted reluctance to a murder which he committed only ten days after. In one of his marauding expeditions, he seized Andrew Hislop, and carried him prisoner along with him to the house of Sir James Johnston of Westerraw, without any design, it would appear, of putting him to death. As Hislop was taken on his lands, Westerraw insisted on passing sentence of death upon him. Claverhouse opposed this, and pressed a delay of the execution; but his host urging him, he yielded, saying, "The blood of this poor man be upon you, Westerraw; I am free of it." A Highland gentleman, who was traversing the country, having come that way with a company of soldiers, Claverhouse meanly endeavoured to make him the executioner of Westerraw's sentence; but that gentleman, having more humanity and a higher sense of honour, drew off his men to some distance, and swore that he would fight Colonel Grahame sooner than perform such an office. Upon this, Claverhouse ordered three of his own soldiers to do it. When they were ready to fire, they desired Hislop to draw his bonnet over his face, but he refused, telling them that he had done nothing of which he had reason to be ashamed, and could look them in the face without fear, and holding up his Bible in one of his hands, and reminding them of the account which they had to render, he received the contents of their muskets in his body.—Say, reader, who was the hero, and who the coward, on this occasion? We have no doubt that every person of genuine feeling, and whose judgment is unwarped by prejudice, will pronounce, that this man met his death with truer and more praiseworthy courage, than Claverhouse afterwards did, when he died "in the arms of victory," to use the canting language of certain historians, "and wiped off the stain which he had contracted by his cruelties to the Covenanters,"—a stain which no victory, however brilliant, could efface, and which all the art and labour of his most eloquent apologists, instead of covering, will only serve to bring more clearly into view.

In spite of these indisputable facts, which the friends of Claverhouse

have never dared to deny, he is a great favourite with our author, who has made him not only a hero, but a profound politician, and a disinterested patriot! What cannot genius effect? And what will confidence in talents, provided it is propped by prejudice, and elevated by popular credulity, not undertake to perform? The author is not contented with holding out the character of Claverhouse in this light,—he employs all his art, and all the powers of his eloquence, to impress it on the imagination of his readers. This he does, partly by the description which he gives of it in his own name, partly by what he puts into the mouths of his most respectable characters, and partly by the manner in which he represents this hero as speaking and acting in the interesting scenes in which he is made to figure. It is not from any one of these taken singly that we must judge of the character, but from all of them taken together, and particularly from the last, of which extracts cannot convey an idea, although no reader can for a moment doubt of its effect from the impression left on his mind. We shall, however, quote the description which the author has given of Claverhouse upon his first appearance, as an introduction to the remarks which we have to make upon the character given of him throughout the work. After a minute description of his person—the elegance of his shape—the gracefulness of his gesture, language, and manners—the feminine regularity of his features—the delicacy of his complexion, with other marks of beauty, which “contributed to form such a countenance as limners love to paint, and ladies to look upon,” and his “tone of voice of that happy modulation which could alike melt in the low tones of interesting conversation, and rise amid the din of battle, loud as a trumpet with a silver sound;” the author adds,—

“The severity of his character, as well as the higher attributes of undaunted and enterprising valour, which even his enemies were compelled to admit, lay concealed under an exterior which seemed adapted to the court or the saloon, rather than the field. The same gentleness and gaiety of expression which reigned in his features, seemed to inspire his actions and gestures; and, on the whole, he was generally esteemed, at first sight, rather qualified to be the votary of pleasure than of ambition. But under this soft exterior was hidden a spirit unbounded in daring and in aspiring, yet cautious and prudent as that of Machiavel himself. Profound in politics, and imbued, of course, with that disregard for individual rights which its intrigues usually generate, this leader was cool and collected in danger, fierce and ardent in pursuing success, careless of death himself, and ruthless in inflicting it upon others. Such are the characters formed in times of civil discord, when the highest qualities, perverted by party spirit, and inflamed by habitual opposition, are too often combined with vices and excesses which deprive them at once of their merit and of their lustre.”—(Vol. ii. pp. 287, 288.)

To this may be added, the comparison which the author afterwards states between the characters of Dalziel and Claverhouse. Having described the exterior appearance of the former (almost in the words of Captain John Creighton, or rather of Dean Swift, except that he men-

tions the antique fashion of his boots, an article of dress which that respectable authority tells us he never wore), the author says,—

“His high and wrinkled forehead, piercing grey eyes, and marked features, evinced age, unbroken by infirmity, and stern resolution, unsoftened by humanity. Such is the outline, however feebly expressed, of the celebrated General Thomas Dalziel, a man more feared and hated by the Whigs than even Claverhouse himself, and who executed the same violence against them out of a detestation of their persons, or perhaps an innate severity of temper, which Grahame only resorted to on political accounts, as the best means of intimidating the followers of Presbytery, and of destroying that sect entirely.”—(Vol. iv. pp. 25, 26.)

In the first place, here is a glaring contradiction in terms. We are told that the violences which Claverhouse executed on the Whigs, he “*only* resorted to on *political* accounts,” as contradistinguished from “an innate *severity* of temper.” And yet the author had before given a conspicuous place to the “*severity* of his character,” and described him as “careless of death himself, and *ruthless* in inflicting it upon others.” Or, did he mean to impute Claverhouse’s disregard of his own life to political considerations, and thus to divest him of personal courage and a martial spirit (the only quality to which he had an undisputed claim), that he might shield him from the charge of inhumanity? Again, after having gravely told us that Dalziel was actuated by the innate severity of his temper, and Claverhouse solely by political considerations, “as the best means of *intimidating* the followers of Presbytery,” the author within a little represents the latter as continuing “an unwearied and bloody pursuit,” under the impulse of his “fiery and *vindictive*” temper, while the former is represented as urging the pursuit entirely on political accounts, and as a means “to *intimidate* these desperate rebels.”—(Vol. iv. p. 62-64.)

“Quo teneam vultus mutantem Protea modo?”

The author frequently quotes proverbs, and he may perhaps have heard of one which is not without its meaning,—“Better a black devil than a white.” Where two characters are noted or even suspected for cruelty, we would far sooner throw ourselves on the mercy of him who is of severe brow and harsh manners, than of him whose real dispositions are concealed under a smiling countenance and the most fawning address. We have in our eye facts directly bearing upon the case under consideration. Dalziel was guilty of great cruelties; yet there is at least one instance which shows that his innate severity, hardened by a long course of barbarous service, was not altogether unsusceptible of humane impressions, and that he could treat even a puritanical prisoner with generosity. John Paton was a captain in the Presbyterian army at Pentland, and on that occasion had fought sword in hand with Dalziel, whom he had encountered on the field. When he was brought into Edinburgh as a prisoner after the battle of Bothwell, a soldier upbraided him with being a rebel, to whom he mildly replied, “I have done more for the king than perhaps you have done,” referring to the

battle of Worcester, where he had fought for Charles. Dalziel overhearing the conversation, said, "Yes, John, that is true," and turning to the soldier, struck him with his cane, and told him he would teach him other manners than to abuse such a prisoner. He then expressed his sorrow for Paton's situation, said he would have set him at liberty if he had met him on the way, and promised that he would yet write to the king for his life. Paton thanked him, but added, "You will not be heard." "Will I not?" replied the General; "if he does not grant me the life of one man, I shall never draw a sword for him again." It is said that he obtained a reprieve for Paton; but he was not able to procure his life. Now, we know of no instance of Claverhouse doing an action of this kind, except in the fictions of the tale before us. We have mentioned it to show that the Presbyterian writers, who have recorded it, were not disposed to overlook any act of clemency towards them on the part of those who had been the instruments of their greatest sufferings, and also to show how grossly our author has blundered in the comparison which he has drawn between the characters of these two officers.

Whether the author took the likeness from limners or ladies, we shall not inquire: we are willing to allow that Claverhouse's features were feminine, and his complexion almost effeminate. All that we maintain is, that this soft and prepossessing exterior no more proves that he was not cruel, than it proves that he was courageous. Without having recourse either to the physiognomical theory of Lavater, or the cranio-logical system of Spurzheim, or examining either "a Grecian statue" or a Gothic, the author might have learned from plain history, that individuals distinguished for their personal beauty and blandishing manners, have been hardened, relentless, and savage in their dispositions. While the facts which we have mentioned remain undisputed, what has he done but described a *beautiful bloodhound*, "cool and collected in danger, fierce and ardent in pursuing success, careless of death himself, and ruthless in inflicting it upon others?"

But let us examine the second trait in the character of Claverhouse, by which the author attempts to throw a shade over his cruelties. He was, it seems, profoundly versed in politics, and having imbibed the creed of Machiavel, he had recourse to severe and violent measures, not from any propensity to these, but from a cool conviction, deliberately formed, that they were the means best adapted to promote the public good, and even ultimately to lessen the effusion of human blood. This has at least the merit of novelty. None of the former historians or biographers of the brave Dundee ever conceived such an ingenious thought as this. They could represent the impetuosity of his courage as hurrying him into excesses, or they could insinuate, that the orders which he received, or the conduct of the people whom he was employed to suppress, rendered it necessary for him to be severe and unrelenting; apologies which readily suggest themselves to the lowest and most

illiterate ruffian that plunders and murders under the protection of a red coat or a commission. But it never entered into their barren conceptions to send him to study in the schools of Italy, or to represent him as initiated into all the refined and deep mysteries of the Florentine politician. Sir John Dalrymple has told us, without alleging a single authority, but with as great confidence and minuteness as if he had been copying from memoirs by Dundee himself, or by his secretary, that he "had inflamed his mind, from his earliest youth, by the perusal of ancient poets, historians, and orators, with the love of the great actions they praise and describe. He is reported to have inflamed it still more, by listening to the ancient songs of the Highland bards." But our author goes another way to work, and represents his hero as spending his youth in poring over the dark pages of Machiavel, and in threading the intricate mazes of political disquisition—an employment not very congenial to a mind that was enraptured with the songs of ancient and modern bards. Such are the inconsistencies and improbabilities in which writers involve themselves, who, in describing a favourite character,

—— "disentangle from the puzzled skein,
In which obscurity has wrapp'd them up,
The threads of politic and shrewd design,
That ran through all his purposes, and charge
His mind with meanings that he never had."

To describe Claverhouse as "profound in politics," appears to us ridiculous in the extreme. It is not supported by anything in his character or conduct. The qualities of a profound politician are very rarely found combined with those of a brave and enterprising officer;—we speak of state politics, not those of the camp. Even as to the latter, we have never been able to see good grounds for the eulogiums that certain writers have passed upon Dundee, although we are not disposed to contest a point which lies without our sphere. But sure we are, that he could have no claim to political sagacity, unless its maxims are all comprised in the words which the author puts into his mouth, after the victory of Bothwell,—“Kill, kill—no quarter,” which, with due modification to the state of a country not in actual insurrection, will exhaust the whole of his political creed. To what purpose talk of “a disregard to *individual* rights, as generated by political intrigues, with reference to a man whose whole conduct was a trampling on general and national rights, both in his treatment of the Presbyterians, and in his attempts to maintain a tyrant on the throne?

Claverhouse is introduced as boasting of his disinterestedness, and it is evidently intended that he should be believed. Ambition, we believe, was his ruling passion, and we feel no inclination to urge the allegation which has been brought against him, as equally eager to share in the fines exacted from the Covenanters as any of his brethren in arms. But ambition is a selfish passion as well as avarice, and more destructive of public good. Our author represents fidelity as a striking trait in Claverhouse's character. Thus he makes him to say, “Faithful and true, are

words never thrown away upon me, Mr Morton." Had he entertained just notions of fidelity, or respected that virtue in others, he could not have acted as he did to the Covenanters, against whom no accusation could be brought but fidelity in adhering to the most sacred engagements that ever any people were brought under. The fidelity with which he adhered to the interests of James cannot be viewed as highly meritorious, when it is considered how obnoxious and odious he had made himself by his cruelties to the opposite party. Nor should it be forgotten, that the Viscount Dundee made proposals to King William, and employed a bishop to ascertain the conditions upon which he might make his peace with the new Government, although the terms offered to him were such as to be irreconcilable with his restless and ambitious spirit. The Earl of Melfort may be presumed to have been better acquainted with Dundee's character than any modern author, who appears to have formed his judgment of it chiefly from the work of a portrait-painter. We are informed by Lord Balcarras, that this statesman wrote to the General, that James had drawn up his declaration of indemnity and toleration in such ambiguous terms, that he might break his promises whenever he pleased. And so far was Melfort from fearing that this would shock Dundee's nice sense of honour and fidelity, that he communicated it as a piece of information which he knew would be highly gratifying to him. Are the words "faithful and true" synonymous, in our author's vocabulary, with an approbation of one of the most detestable principles of the Machiavellian school? or did he expect his readers to believe that these opposite qualities were blended in the same character?

In fine, is it alleged, in extenuation of his cruelties, that his character was formed "in times of civil discord, when the highest qualities" are "perverted by party spirit, and inflamed by habitual opposition?" We reply, that among all the actors in these bloody scenes, Claverhouse had the least claim to this apology. He left his native country at an early period of life, before he could be supposed to have taken any particular interest in the strife of its parties; his character, so far as it depended on external circumstances, was formed in France and Holland; and when he returned to Scotland, he entered at once into all the severe and barbarous measures of the Government.

It will be said that the author has allowed that Claverhouse was one of those characters, whose high qualities are "combined with vices and excesses, which deprive them at once of their merit and of their lustre." We know that he has; and if he had said nothing of a contrary tendency, although we think his language an extremely inadequate expression of the atrocities to which it relates, still we should not have reckoned it necessary to animadvert upon it particularly. But what we complain of is, that he has not exhibited, as was his duty, these vices and excesses, so as to excite a due detestation of them in the minds of his readers. We complain, that in the representation given of him in the tale, Claverhouse's vices are shaded, and his excesses diminished, with the most

glaring partiality. We complain, that excuses are made for his conduct, to which he had no claim, or which ought to have been urged in aggravation, and not in extenuation of his guilt. We complain, that his good qualities are industriously brought forward, and unduly blazoned, and that others are ascribed to him which he did not possess. And we complain, that by these means, a bloody, unrelenting, and remorseless persecutor, and one of the most active and unprincipled supporters of arbitrary and despotic power, is exhibited in such flattering colours, as to attract admiration to a character, which, had its features been delineated with the pencil of truth, would have excited little else than feelings of indignation and horror. So that the author, by his description, practically contradicts what he had admitted in general terms, and has done what was in his power to restore to the character that merit and lustre, to use his own phraseology, of which its vices and excesses had justly deprived it.

A very cursory survey of the scene at Tillietudlem, when Morton's fate depended upon the determination of Claverhouse, will show that our complaints are not groundless. This is evidently introduced by the author as a fair representation of the cruelties with which Grahame was chargeable. But how unlike to the truth! Does Claverhouse shoot Morton with his own hand? O horrid! No. Is Morton shot at all? No. How, then, does he escape with his life? Is he rescued from death by the sudden advance of his friends, the Whigs? Not at all. The author is more sparing and judicious in the use of poetic machinery than old doting Homer, who is ever depriving his heroes of the glory of a victory, or of an act of clemency, by imputing these to the intervention of one or other of his officious gods. Something of this kind was highly proper, and it is not withheld, when Morton was afterwards to be saved from the bloody fangs of the savage fanatics at Drumshinnel. But it was quite unnecessary and superfluous to have recourse to any such expedient on the present occasion. Morton is perfectly safe under the protection of his good friends, the Tories; and Claverhouse, after a struggle with his sense of the duty which he owed to his superiors, and the severe measures which he deemed necessary to repress the mutinous spirit that was spreading through the country, finally yields to spare the life of Morton, though he was charged with resetting the murderer of the archbishop, and though his spirit and talents might afterwards prove dangerous to the Government. But is all this easily accomplished? No, not quite easily either. It has cost the author four whole chapters, consisting of considerably above a hundred pages of as good paper and letter-press as any in the whole work. Let us look into them, and examine their contents.

The tenth chapter prepares us for being admitted into "the presence of the dreaded chief," by an interesting conversation on his character between Miss Bellenden and Morton. The former, indeed, speaks with great dread and horror of the inexorable severity of Claverhouse's

character. But then we recollect that apprehensions for the fate of her lover have raised her fears to an undue pitch, and if we participated for a moment in her fears, we are relieved by Morton's reply, "Claverhouse, though stern and relentless, is, by *all* accounts, brave, fair, and honourable." This would have allayed the fears of even Miss Bellenden herself, had it not been for a circumstance mentioned in a letter which her grandmother had that morning received from the grieved and incensed colonel. "The unhappy primate was his intimate friend and early patron!" And on that account he threatened, that, "no excuse, no subterfuge, shall save either those connected with the deed, or such as have given them countenance and shelter, from the ample and bitter penalty of the law." Morton was in this way placed in very peculiar circumstances of danger. We should like to know something of the history of the letter which contained this piece of new and important information. It would be curious to know whether it had fallen into the hands of the Cameronians, and being suppressed by them, was discovered upon Old Mortality when he was "found on the highway near Lockerby, in Dumfriesshire, exhausted and just expiring;" or whether we owe it to the researches of some of the non-jurant bishops, who kindly communicated it to the author. The public may afterwards be gratified with this piece of history. In the mean time, as no doubt can be entertained of the genuineness of the letter, it unquestionably throws new light upon the character of Claverhouse. We now cease to wonder at the reluctance which he showed to spare Morton at the intercession of Major Bellenden; and if we cannot just approve of all the severities which he afterwards practised on the Covenanters, we must at least feel a respect for the motive which prompted him to inflict them.

In the eleventh chapter, the reader is conveyed to the battlements of the tower of Tillietudlem, and is presented with a most charming prospect of the surrounding scenery. While he is feasting on this enchanting landscape, his ears are attracted by the distant sounds of martial music. The expected body of cavalry make their appearance, and the long and imposing train, and "the glancing of the swords, and waving of their banners, joined to the clang of their trumpets and kettle-drums," have "at once a lively and awful effect upon the imagination." They present themselves in front of the castle; and while the standard is lowered "amid the fanfare of the trumpets and the stamp and neigh of the chargers," "Claverhouse himself alighted from a black horse, the most beautiful perhaps in Scotland—he had not a single white hair upon his whole body"—and he was shot-proof, according to the opinion of "the superstitious fanatics,"—and the heroic chief is instantly at the feet of the ladies, whom he salutes "with military politeness."

The twelfth chapter introduces us into the presence of Claverhouse, and we are enamoured with his personal accomplishments and captivating manners. We are then made to listen to an account of Morton's danger and escape, which is continued in the succeeding or thirteenth

chapter. As to this, it might suffice to say, that we never once feel any apprehension for his fate, nor think that he is in the least danger from the severity of Claverhouse. We hear the author (not Claverhouse) exclaim, "Bothwell, why do you not bring up the prisoner? And hark ye," as if he knew that he was not listened to, or believed, "let two files load their carabines." We are told that a prisoner has entered the room heavily ironed; but we hear not the clank of his chains. This may arise from our dulness; but the feelings of Edith Bellenden are not widely different. "Her blood, which rushed to her brow, made a sudden revulsion to her heart, and left her as pale as death." But was this from dread of her lover's life? By no means; it arose merely from the consciousness that he had overheard her, as he passed, use an expression which would create jealousy in his breast. "Cautious and prudent as Machiavel himself," she guards against dropping a word which may either betray the real state of her affections, or encourage Evandale's hopes, while she requests his intercession in behalf of Morton; and with great coolness and self-command she adheres to her first expression, "Try it for my *uncle's* sake." Indeed, it is with the greatest difficulty that the author can get her to go through her part of the farce with any degree of tolerable decency—by all his prompting—by uttering a sigh for her—and at last, in utter despair, by giving her a concealed but sure blow, which would have made her to have "fallen flat upon the pavement, had she not been caught by her attendant;" upon which Lord Evandale very coolly leaves her, and, taking Claverhouse into another apartment, restored his chafed commander to his usual reason and moderation. But we may appeal to the manager of the piece himself in support of the justness of our feelings. What does he do? When he has placed the prisoner at the bar of Claverhouse, and when, if there is any truth in history, the trial could not be long, nor the execution of the sentence distant, he takes the reader aside, and very gravely commences a tedious discourse, in which he unfolds the true character of Morton—states his religious and political principles—gives an account of his courtship—opens up the cause of his jealousy—draws a character of Miss Bellenden's waiting-woman—mentions how she used to tease the poor lover—and tells a story respecting Lord Evandale,—not omitting to introduce, under these heads, appropriate illustrations from Mrs Quickly and Uncle Toby. The chapter in which all this information is contained (for it has a new chapter allotted to it) begins in the following manner:—

"O my lord, beware of jealousy."—OTHELLO.

"To explain the deep effect which the few broken passages of the conversation we have detailed made upon the unfortunate prisoner, by whom they were overheard, it is necessary to say something of his previous state of mind, and of the origin of his connection with Edith. Henry Morton was one of those gifted characters, which possess a force of talent unsuspected by the owner himself."—And so on to the middle of the chapter.

"What an absurd and disgusting digression! Sure, Poundtext, Rumbleberry, Kettledrummle, Heathercat, Gumblegumption, nor any other of the gifted brethren among the Presbyterians, ever made a sermon more out of place or more wearisome than this is!" Softly, simple enthusiast; thou penetratest not the secret of the author, nor perceivest the perplexities from which he must extricate himself. It is necessary to give some feasible account of a "singular and instantaneous revolution" in Morton's character, of which the author needs to avail himself "for the moment." It is necessary that Morton should conduct himself in a rude, imprudent, and outrageous manner, in order that he may be a fit representative of those who felt the severity of the judge before whom he stands. Can we believe, on any other supposition, that the polite, brave, generous, fair, and honourable Claverhouse, would have condemned him to die? No; he needed to be baited, bayed, challenged, and insulted, and that by a prisoner charged with a capital offence, and expected, as their leader, by a body of rebels, then in arms at a little distance. And this prisoner he, after all, generously pardons at the intercession of Lord Evandale. Say now, "descendants of those enthusiasts whom he persecuted, among whom the name of the Bloody Clavers is held in equal abhorrence, and rather more terror, than that of Satan himself,"—say, if you can now accuse him of cruelty, or even undue severity; and if you are not forced to admit and admire the uncommon clemency with which he spared the lives of your fanatical fathers!

The character of Claverhouse having passed this ordeal, is henceforward held forth as entitled to almost unlimited admiration and applause. His patriotism and disinterestedness, as well as his bravery, are talked of; and on one occasion the reader is persuaded that he sees the tear of humanity trickling down his soft cheek (vol. iii. p. 139). If he is seen at Bothwell Bridge, "like a hawk perched on a rock, and eyeing the time to pounce on its prey," he descends on Drumshinnel, like a protecting angel, to save the innocent. Morton, having fallen into his hands, is treated by him rather as a friend and companion than a prisoner; and while he enjoys the company of "this remarkable man," is delighted and astonished "by the varied play of his imagination, and the depth of his knowledge of human nature!"

We may perhaps have dwelt too long on this flattering and fallacious picture; but we judged that we were performing a sacred duty to the cause of truth, humanity, and public good, in exposing such a flagrant attempt to recommend a character which deserves almost unqualified detestation. We intended to have subjoined some reflections upon the bad tendencies of a practice which has of late become too general among our popular writers, who exert all their eloquence to exalt the military character above every other, to invest it with "the highest qualities," and to throw such a dazzling glare over the display of personal valour and martial abilities, as to conceal the cruelties with

which it is accompanied, and in a great measure to reconcile the mind to it, even when it is employed to enslave mankind, and to rear or uphold the empire of despotism and tyranny. But we must conclude that part of our review which relates to the partiality shown by the author to the oppressors of the Presbyterians; and we cannot do this better than by quoting a passage from a beautiful little poem which has appeared in the *Poetic Mirror*, and which we should have liked to have seen in a separate form. It is *said* to be written by Walter Scott. It certainly would have done no discredit to the talents of that celebrated poet; but some of its most prominent sentiments—not to speak of the style—bear so very little resemblance to his, that very few, we apprehend, will be disposed to give him the merit of being its author. We are happy, however, to perceive, by looking into his late edition of Swift's Works, that Mr Scott is now convinced that the treatment of the Presbyterians, between 1660 and 1688, *was* a "persecution," of which he appeared formerly to entertain some doubts; and we are not altogether without hopes that at some future period his sentiments may undergo such a revolution as to induce him to admit the justice of the following character of Claverhouse, although he should not be able to claim the lines in which it is so well drawn.

" There, worthy of his masters, came
The despot's champion, *bloody Grahame*,
To stain for aye a warrior's sword,
And lead a fierce, though fawning horde,
The *human* bloodhounds of the earth,
To hunt the peasant from his hearth!
—Tyrants! could not misfortune teach,
That man has rights beyond your reach?
Thought ye the torture and the stake
Could that intrepid spirit break,
Which even in woman's breast withstood
The terrors of the fire and flood!"

PART II.

" Yes; though the sceptic's tongue deride
 Those martyrs who for conscience died,—
 Though modish history blight their fame,
 And sneering courtiers hoot the name
 Of men who dared alone be free,
 Amidst a nation's slavery,—
 Yet long for them the poet's lyre
 Shall wake its notes of heavenly fire;
 Their names shall nerve the patriot's hand,
 Upraised to save a sinking land;
 And piety shall learn to burn
 With holier transports o'er their urn!"

Epistle to R. S.

THERE is something extremely fascinating in all that is done by a man of genius. Persons of minor talents are irresistibly attracted by his motions, and follow him even in his eccentricities, and greatest aberrations from good sense and propriety. Since the days of the *Spectator*, it has been an invariable practice with the authors of all periodical works of the same literary complexion, to begin each paper with a motto in Latin or in Greek. The author of the *Tales* having struck out a new species of fictitious writing, which, it is expected, will continue as fashionable during the nineteenth, as that of the *Spectator* was during the eighteenth century, has given it a distinctive mark, by prefixing to each chapter a select piece of English poetry. This has already become so popular, that a friend of ours lately addressed us on the propriety of our following the example, and prefixing a few lines of poetry to each paper of our prosaic instructions. We could not help demurring to this unexpected proposal, and signified, that the practice appeared to us to savour very strongly of affectation and puerility, and that our readers would certainly take it into their heads that we were a company of concealed poets or poetasters, who, being forced out of employment by the badness of the times, had betaken ourselves, for the sake of making a little money, to the business of editing religious communications, and who would leave them and return to our old work as soon as trade revived. "Not at all, not at all," said he, in a tone of decision which rather embarrassed us; "you must allow me to know these things better than you. The public are not so jealous nor so far-sighted as you think them to be. I can tell you that the practice in question has contributed as much as anything to the popularity of the *Tales*; and I could not help smiling in my sleeve, to see you very gravely and philosophic-

ally assigning a number of reasons for concluding that they were written by the author of *Waverley* and *Guy Mannering*, while you passed over the most palpable and convincing of all. Ask the publisher, and I am persuaded he will tell you that the uniform practice of purchasers, on taking up the book, is to look at the title-page and beginning of the chapters, and upon perceiving the poetical impress on these, they at once draw the conclusion, and throw down the money. I can assure you that it forms one of their leading beauties, and exhibits, in fact, that 'variety combined with unity,' which you insinuated was wanting in them. It has a most wonderful effect upon the mind of the reader—an effect which may be compared to that of the chorus in the ancient Greek tragedy, or of a song between the acts of a modern comedy, or of the tuck of the drum during the intervals of evolution at a military review, or the sound of the huntsman's horn upon the dogs at a fox chase; or, not to multiply figures on a topic so evident, and to comprehend all in one, like the effect of the stroke of an auctioneer's hammer at the end of every article of sale." Here our friend began to recommend to us the imitation of the style and manner of a periodical work recently begun in this city; but on our exhibiting strong symptoms of disgust, he desisted, and resumed his former theme. "Well," continued he, "I shall undertake to provide you with a motto for the title-page of your present volume, as appropriate as that of the Tales, from Burns's 'Cottar's Saturday Night,' or from the *Gude and Godly Ballates* of Græme Dalyell;—be not afraid, I do not mean Grahame of Claverhouse, or Dalziel of Binns, but John Dalyell, Esq., advocate, who edited the ballads; and I shall also select for you an extract from Chateaubriand's *Beauties of Christianity*, to be placed in the original French, with a translation, opposite the title; both of which will continue to stand as a perpetual frontispiece to all your subsequent volumes. In the mean time, lay you in a sufficient quantity of extracts for the interior departments of your magazine." Not willing to differ altogether with our adviser, of whose intelligence, as well as friendly dispositions, we have had many satisfying proofs, we resolved to yield so far as make the trial in one instance; and accordingly, in imitation of the Tales, we have begun the second part of our review with a reasonably long extract from the poem from which we quoted at the close of the preceding part.

In justice to ourselves, we must, however, observe, that neither the example of the author of the Tales, nor the persuasions of our friend, would have induced us to this compliance, if we had not been convinced of two things. The first is, the intrinsic excellence of the lines which we have prefixed, and their extreme suitableness to our purpose. They exhibit, in a succinct form, and with much beauty and force, what we wish to lay before our readers in greater detail in the following pages. And indeed it would not have been easy for us to have conveyed, in so few words, the ideas which we have of our persecuted ancestors, and of those who made it their business to deride and calumniate them. This

being the case, we stand acquitted of the charge of puerile affectation. Secondly, we are completely satisfied of the justness of the character which they give to the sufferers. If we had entertained any doubts on this head, or been afraid that we might not be able to vindicate our fathers from the slander with which they are aspersed in the work under review, we would certainly have given a less conspicuous place to the lines in praise of them ; for we make no pretensions to that high quality of the author of the *Tales*, by which he takes the liberty of saying whatever sounds well, and is calculated to make an impression for the moment, without considering if he can prove it, or make it consistent with what he may afterwards advance. We do not write for the readers of novels, nor will *our* ambition be gratified by gaining the approbation of the children of credulity and the slaves of prejudice.

We flatter ourselves that we have, in the preceding part of this review, sufficiently proved that the author, in his representation, has discovered glaring partiality to the persecutors of the Presbyterians, by veiling their cruelties, and by presenting their characters in a favourable but false light. We now go on to show that he is guilty of injustice, equally glaring, in the view which he has given of the character and conduct of the oppressed and persecuted Presbyterians.

In drawing the character of the persecutors, the author used no small art ; and we found it necessary to attend to the nicer touches of his pencil, by which he blended light and shade together, and softened the harsher features of his portraits. But here he has in a great measure saved us the trouble of minute inspection. No one can be at a loss to perceive, at a single glance, the characters in the Covenanted group. They are not greatly diversified ; their features are few, they are strongly marked, and the colours are laid on with no sparing or delicate hand. In general they are either fools or madmen, or hypocrites and rogues, and for the most part they are a compound of both. Look upon them, and you instantly recognise the Puritan and precisian. Approach nearer and examine them more narrowly, and you find them to be wild enthusiasts and gloomy fanatics. They express themselves, even in their ordinary conversation, in a strange, ridiculous, and incoherent jargon, compounded of Scripture phrases, and cant terms peculiar to their own party opinions in ecclesiastical polity. They are utterly destitute of all knowledge of civil rights, and of any enlightened regard to the principles of political liberty. They are of disloyal principles, and rancorous in their political hatred. They are enemies to all elegant studies, as well as innocent recreations. Amidst all their affected preciseness, and claims to superior godliness, they are selfish, and do not scruple to have recourse to base and wicked means to advance the good cause, or to promote their own interest. They are as much disposed to persecute as their adversaries. They are destitute of military talents, and show themselves as incapable of vindicating their claims in the field as of recommending themselves to the Government by the moderation and mildness of their behaviour. In fine, many of them

have imbibed the principles of assassination, and are prepared to act upon them.

Except in the last-mentioned particular, this is the character which the author gives of the Presbyterians, both indulged and non-indulged,—the only difference between the two classes consisting in the higher degree of extravagance and enthusiasm displayed by the latter. To relieve the mind in some degree in contemplating this bloated and unsightly picture, the author, by a singular exertion of candour or of compassion, has condescended to admit, at some distance from the gloomy group, *one* rigid recusant who yet retains the humane and social affections, in the person of a poor widow. Morton cannot be considered as an exception. He was a Presbyterian neither in principle nor in spirit; he joined them from accident and irritation; he was never happy till he was delivered from their society, and found himself under the protection of the amiable and accomplished Claverhouse; and as long as he was among them, he was unable to find an individual with whom he could sympathise, except the liberal-minded Cuddie Headrigg, who often, “though with less refinement, was following out a similar train of ideas,” and who alone was capable of understanding his “chartered rights as a freeman.” To give his summary account of the Covenanters—“One party declares for the ravings of a blood-thirsty madman; another leader is an old scholastic pedant; a third”—the poor child durst not proceed farther for fear of Balfour, who finished the sentence for him—“is a desperate homicide, thou wouldest say, like John Balfour of Burley.” Did we think the author as weak as he has made his hero, and had we been alone with him, as Burley was with Morton, we would have been disposed to have taken our leave of him with the words that follow in his narrative—“I can bear this misconstruction without resentment.” But as he has said more than he has put into the mouth of his silly “stripling,” and as the cause is before the public, we must have a few serious words with him on this subject before we can agree to separate.

The good people of Scotland, who inherit any portion of the spirit of their fathers, will, no doubt, be amazed to see those whom they have been accustomed to revere as patriots, and to venerate as confessors and martyrs for truth, now held up to derision as mad enthusiasts, and reviled as hypocritical and murderous ruffians. Even those who, from their peculiar sentiments, do not sympathise deeply with these feelings, will be shocked at the profane levity with which the most sacred subjects are exposed to ridicule, and will feel themselves at a loss to account for such a singular and daring attempt. But such as are acquainted with the history of former times, and have been attentive observers of the changes that public opinion has lately undergone, will not be surprised, nor think that any strange thing has happened. They have for some time anticipated an attack of this kind, and therefore are not altogether unprepared for meeting it. They know that it is only the overflowing of that gall and spite against the Reformation principles of Scotland,

religious and political, which has always lodged in the breasts of a certain faction, and which has burst forth in consequence of the removal of those restraints by which it was long reluctantly pent up, or forced to vent itself in secret. They can trace the causes which have led to this eruption. They see them in the force with which the current of public opinion, impelled by recent events, has been directed into the old channel of hereditary rights and royal legitimacy, to the overbearing and carrying away of all well-grounded jealousies of arbitrary power and slavish non-resistance. They see them in the progress of infidelity, which natively generates a contempt for religious reformers, and which disposes its votaries, whatever their political sentiments be, secretly to rejoice at whatever lowers the reputation of such men, and to view with indifference, if not with hostility, all struggles for the rights of conscience, provided they are combined with zeal for the preservation of a particular creed or form of ecclesiastical polity. They see them in the adoption, by different parties, of religious opinions very different from those which were once almost universally embraced in Scotland, and especially of that opinion, common to almost all of them—that religious and civil concerns ought to be completely separated—a principle which lays the proceedings of our reforming and suffering ancestors open to easy attack, and upon which it will be found impossible satisfactorily to vindicate their conduct. In fine, they see them in the overweening conceit of the present age, by which it is disposed to wrap itself in its own fancied acquirements and doings, and to undervalue those that preceded it; as if there had been nothing good and great before we were born; and as if all the knowledge and all the privileges, both political and religious, which we possess, had been acquired by our own exertions or communicated to us immediately from heaven, instead of being transmitted to us by the faithful contendings and the blood of those who lived in former times. All of these causes, we are of opinion, have contributed to induce the public to favour or wink at the more partial and sparing attacks which the author of the work under review, along with other writers of the same stamp, has formerly made on the character of our religious forefathers. And having felt his ground, and ascertained that the danger is not great, he has been encouraged to make the present attempt. Whether it shall succeed altogether according to his wishes, or whether the event may prove that he has been too sanguine in his expectations, it is not for us to determine.

We repeat it—we were not startled at the picture of our persecuted ancestors presented to us in the *Tales*. It was not new to us. We had often seen it before. We could recognise every feature. There is only an alteration in the costume and border work, and a slight softening of the colours, to adapt it to the taste of the age. In all other respects the author has faithfully copied his great originals. This is not the first time that the enemies of the Whigs or Presbyterians have “said all manner of evil falsely against them.” None can be ignorant of this who is acquainted with the writings of court sycophants during the

reigns of the two last Stuarts, and of the High Church and Jacobitish faction after the Revolution in England, Ireland, and Scotland—who has read the speeches of Jeffreys and Mackenzie, or consulted the pages of Butler, Dryden, and Swift, of Colvil, Pitcairn, and Rhind. “Tis difficult to name that ill thing which a Heylin, a Hicks, a Lessley, a Sacheverel, a Calder, or some other very reverend divine of the like probity, has not writ of them, or imputed to them. Who were the instruments that procured the Spanish Armada to invade England in 1588? The Whigs. Who burned London in 1666? The Whigs. Who piloted in and assisted the Dutch to burn the English fleet at Chatham? The Whigs. Nay, who crucified Jesus Christ? Who but the Whigs? The very children are taught to lisp out that. *Calves-head feasts* are with these authors true history. Why? Because one of themselves wrote it, and the rest cite it, and who dares doubt it after that?”¹

In support of the justness of his statements, and even of the very language which he has employed, our author can appeal to high and learned authority. “This I am sure of,” said Lord Chief Justice Jeffreys, “lying is as much the talent of a Presbyterian as it can be of a Papist, nay more; for it is as inseparably incident to a Presbyterian (and such snivelling, whining, canting knaves) to lie as to speak. They can no more forbear lying than they can forbear speaking; for, generally, as often as they do the one, they do the other.”²—“We know well enough,” said the same enlightened and liberal-minded judge, on another trial, “you snivelling saints can lie. When people come to gild over their bitter pill of sedition, it is always under the pretence of religion. It is well known these (the preachers) are the belwethers of the faction, that, under pretence of religion, come there to incense the people to commit all these villanies that sometimes they are incited to do, as we know. How many of them stand now convicted, by outlawry, for that bloody treason (the Rye-house Plot)? I won’t say all parsons, but generally all of them dissenters; and we know these are those base profligate villains, always made use of in these base sinks of rebellion. And they are the common sewers of faction, these conventicles are, and of treason and conspiracy against the government in church and state.”³—“When once they had begun to pick and cull the men that should be returned for a purpose, and got this factious fellow out of one corner, and that pragmatical, prick-eared, snivelling, whining rascal out of another corner, to prop up the cause and serve a turn, then truly people’s causes were tried according to the demureness of the looks on the one side or the other, not the justice of the cause. So, if I have a mind to talk against the Government, I will not do it aloud, and speak what I mean openly, but I will whine, and snivel, and cant; and under this sort of snivelling, canting, sly rate, do a man any injury whatever.”⁴ On the trial of Algernon Sidney, the same judge said, “This book con-

¹ Anderson’s Defence of the Presbyterians, p. 4, where the authorities are given.

² Howell’s State Trials, vol. x. p. 1304.

³ Howell’s State Trials, vol. x. pp. 224, 240, 257.

⁴ Ibid. pp. 366, 370.

tains all the malice and revenge and treason that mankind can be guilty of ;—and the way he makes use of, he colours it with religion, and quotes Scripture for it, too ; and you know how far that went in the late times,—how we were for holding our king in chains, and our nobles in fetters of iron.”¹ Mr Baxter having pleaded, on his trial, that he was moderate in his principles respecting Episcopacy, his Lordship exclaimed, “Baxter for Bishops ! that is a merry conceit indeed !” And his counsel having referred to a part of his writings, “Ay !” said Jeffreys, “this is your Presbyterian cant, ‘truly called to be bishops,’ that is himself, and such rascals, called to be bishops of Kidderminster, and other suchlike places ; bishops set apart by such factious snivelling Presbyterians as himself ; a Kidderminster bishop he means, according to the saying of a late learned author, ‘and every parish shall maintain a tithe-pig metropolitan.’—Richard, Richard, dost thou think we will hear thee poison the court ? Richard, thou art an old fellow, an old knave ; thou hast written books enough to load a cart ; every one is as full of sedition (I might say treason) as an egg is full of meat : hadst thou been whipt out of thy writing trade forty years ago, it had been happy.—He is as modest now as can be ; but time was when no man was so ready at, ‘Bind your kings in chains, and your nobles in fetters of iron ;’ and, ‘To your tents, O Israel !’ Gentlemen, for God’s sake, don’t let us be gulled twice in an egg !”²

Nor does our author want worthy and pertinent precedents in Scotland. It would be easy to produce numerous examples to show that our Scottish statesmen, and judges, and prosecutors, were not behind Jeffreys in moderation and clemency, and elegance of mind and manners. Rebels, fanatics, and madmen, were the mildest words which they employed in speaking of the Presbyterians. The indulged they called moderate fanatics ; the non-indulged, wild or mad-cap fanatics. When they dealt with the latter, they aggravated their offence by referring to the conduct of their more moderate brethren ; and when the former incurred their displeasure, by transgressing any of their arbitrary restrictions, or scrupling at any of their ensnaring oaths and bonds, they with great liberality told them, that the mad-caps were the most consistent men, and that they ought to betake themselves to the hills. We find the Lord Chancellor telling a prisoner on his trial for life, though a gentleman by birth, that he was “not a Scotsman, but a Scots *beast*.” We find him inveighing against a respectable minister, who had done nothing against the laws, as guilty of “a mortal sin, a crime that was sufficient to damn him,” because he hesitated to own that the Prince of Wales was the son of James, and heir to his crowns. And when the minister said, “I hope there is more mercy with God than to damn me for ignorance and weakness,” we find him replying : “It is enough to damn you, and a thousand with you ; for by your calling this in question” (he had not even called it in question), “you are guilty of their

¹ Howell’s State Trials, vol. ix. p. 893.

² Ibid. vol. xi. pp. 499, 501.

sin and damnation who follow your example.”¹ “Linlithgow’s soldiers” were declared to be good enough jurymen “for fanaticks;” and we find Sir George Mackenzie, the King’s Advocate, threatening that he would have recourse to them, when certain juries did not find the prisoners guilty at his direction.² On the trial of Sir Hugh Campbell of Cesnock, a witness, upon whom the court chiefly depended, having retracted, when put to his oath, what he had said against the prisoner in his precognition, the gentlemen present could not refrain from expressing their joy. Upon which the Lord Advocate said, “that he had never heard such a Protestant rore, except on the trial of Shaftesbury; that he had always a kindness for that persuasion, till now that he was convinced, in his conscience, it hugs the most damnable trinket in nature.”³

Nor are the author’s precedents and authorities confined to the period anterior to the Revolution. When they were restrained from torturing and murdering the Presbyterians, the Scottish Episcopalians and Jacobites, abusing the lenity of a new and tolerant government which they eagerly sought to overturn, took up the pen, and, with hands yet besmeared with the blood of their countrymen, employed it in writing against them calumnious invectives, and scurrilous lampoons, which they industriously circulated in England, where the facts were not known, with the view of instigating the English Church to take part with them, first in preventing, and afterwards in overturning the establishment of Presbytery in Scotland.⁴ The authors of these pamphlets were so im-

¹ Cloud of Witnesses, p. 54. Wodrow, vol. ii. p. 642.

² Howell, vol. viii. p. 384.

³ Wodrow, vol. ii. p. 384. — There was a close correspondence between the Lord Chief Justice of England and the Privy Council of Scotland, who reckoned it incumbent on them to express a formal approbation of his *bloody campaigns*, and to request his aid in apprehending and delivering up to them such Scotsmen as escaped from their vengeance. This appears from an act of Council, December 3, 1684: “The Advocate representing how ready Judge Jeffreys was to join with the Council for support of the Government, it is recommended to him to signify to the judge, the great resentments [sense] the Council had of his kindness towards this kingdom, in giving his concurrence against such pernicious rogues and villains who disturb the public peace, and desiring he may cause apprehend the persons of hiding and fugitive Scotsmen, and deliver them securely, on the Scots Border, to such as shall be appointed to receive them.”—Wodrow, vol. ii. p. 350.

⁴ “That which is determined concerning ‘all them that will live godly in Christ Jesus,’ that they ‘must suffer persecution,’ is and hath been the lot of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland; and a generation of men have thus exercised her for many years, by severities hardly paralleled among Protestants. And now when their hands are

tied that they can no more afflict her, their tongues and pens are let loose to tear her without mercy, by the most virulent invectives, and the most horrid lies and calumnies that their wit can invent. Besides this pamphlet, several other prints have been emitted by these men, containing partly historical passages full of lies and reproaches, and partly false and spiteful representations of our principles and way; to which an answer, such as they need and deserve, shall ere long be given, if the Lord permit. That this hath not sooner been done, hath been in a great measure caused by the multitude of matters of fact narrated in them, said to be done in divers places of the nation, far remote from one another, to all which it was necessary to send for getting a true account of these things, and there being but one copy of each of these books that we could find in all Scotland, the several passages for the diverse parts of the country behoved to be transcribed and dispersed. In this matter our adversaries have used a piece of cunning, which is, that these books were spread in England only, where the things contained in them could not be known nor examined; but in Scotland (where most readers could have discovered the falsehood of their allegations) there never was one of them to be found in a bookseller’s shop. But *veritas non querit angulos*.”—*Vindication of the Church of Scotland* (by Principal Rule), Preface. Second edit., 1691.

When one of the party endeavoured to

puident and brazen-faced as to deny that Presbyterians had been subjected to persecution for their religious opinions, and, at the same time that they were pleading for a toleration for themselves, to justify all the intolerant and barbarous measures of the two preceding reigns. "He relates," says one of them, "the sufferings of the Presbyterians in the late reigns ; and this indeed is the general cant and grand topic of many of their former and present pasquils against the Episcopal clergy ; whereas they should rather reflect on the then state. Such as suffered were criminal in law ; and even hundreds were winked at, and pleaded for by the clergy, who might have divulged and accused them. I could enlarge on this head ; but Sir George Mackenzie has so baffled the Presbyterian plea, in his "Vindication of the Reign of King Charles II.," that it is needless to say anything till that book be answered, in which, if I remember right, he hath this passage, 'None died for a principle of religion, unless it be a religious principle to die for actual rebellion.'"¹ "Leaving England to answer for itself," says another, "our author can adduce no instance in Scotland of either man or woman, who, after the Restoration until the Revolution, was either severely used, or put to death, merely on account of their persuasion."² Indeed, this last writer very plainly intimates, that Presbyterians might expect the renewal of the severities which they had lately endured, if ever Episcopacy was restored. "Though a toleration be granted," says he, "perhaps Prelacy will not be restored ; and although Prelacy should be restored, yet Presbyterians (if they please) may forbear to rebel, and so save themselves from scaffolds, imprisonments, and banishments. And so all the author's large harangue on this head is nothing else but ridiculous stuff."³

As Dryden had ridiculed the English Puritans on the stage, our Scottish Episcopalians thought it necessary to attempt something in the same style, and therefore got up a comedy. In their preface to this piece, they say, "It may be objected, that for all our pretences to truth and sincerity in matters of fact, yet we talk at random in the last scene, where we make the Presbyterian ministers speak basely and maliciously of all kings. This is easily answered. It may be considered that the

apologise for this by alleging that they had not the liberty of the press, nor of importing books, the same author replied, "Those of their railing pamphlets which have been imported were never challenged, none ever came to trouble for them, though we well know who brought them into the kingdom."—A just and modest Reproof to a pamphlet called the Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence, p. 34.

¹ A Short Character of the Presbyterian Spirit, 1703, p. 6.

² Toleration Defended, 1703, p. 10. A writer already quoted has said with great justice, that such assertions are made "with the same brow that Maimburg and other French Popish writers do affirm, that all the Protestants who lately in France

turned Papists did turn voluntarily without any compulsion ; and that no rigour nor persecution hath been used to move them to this change. This is a degree of effrontery, of bidding defiance to truth and the God of it, of bold imposing on the reason, yea, and the common sense of mankind, that the world doth purely owe to this age, and to Jesuitical obduration of mind. Woe to posterity if they be abused with such false history ! It is little honesty to transmit such things to after ages ; but it is the height of impudence to publish them among such as were eyewitnesses of them, and among whom the sad effects of them remain with grief and smarting to this day."—Vindic, *ut supra*, p. 20.

³ Toleration Defended, pp. 18, 19.

Presbyterians are enemies to monarchy ; for this is the third time that Presbytery has been established in Scotland, and still upon the death or banishment of some of their lawful sovereigns.”—“The Chorus is as pertinent as anything can be, since they are a set of men who never forgive an injury, and, instead of praying for conversion, they pour down curses for the confusion of their enemies. Our design in this essay is fully to represent the villany and folly of the fanatics, that so, when they are in sober mood, they may seriously reflect on them, and repent for what is past, and make amends for the future, *if it be possible* ; or else, that the civil government may be awakened and roused to rid us of this gang, who injuriously treat all good and learned men, and are enemies to human society itself.”¹ The writers were abundantly sanguine in their expectations of success, and dreamed of nothing but blowing up the Presbyterian Church by their well-contrived plot. To use their own language,—

“True Comedy should humour represent,—
I think for once we’ve well enough hit on’t,
No character’s too wild, nor yet extravagant,—
For there is nothing treated in our play
But what all know the Whigs do act and say :
Thus, you’ve a taste of their new gospel way.”

They were, however, disappointed ; the Scots saw no truth, and the English no humour in it ; those which they had “laid up in store” were not called for ; and the authors were obliged to console themselves with the excuse,—

“Our northern country seldom tastes of wit ;
The too cold clime is justly blamed for it.”

The truth is, they had mistaken their own talent, which did not lie in comedy, but in tragic scenes ; and luckily for the Presbyterians, they did not obtain an opportunity of reacting these. “I’ll tell thee, man, to believe a Presbyterian protestation, is as much as to think a man cannot cheat because he lies. I’m resolved ne’er to trust a fanatic, till I get him on his chair of verity, the stone i’ the Grassmarket ; the villain is then tempted to tell something of the truth,—that is to say, that he dies a rogue and a rebel.

‘And now, since prayers are so much in vogue,
We will with one conclude this epilogue.
Let the just heav’ns our king and peace restore,
And villains never vex us any more.’”²

Passing over at present “The Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence,” and “The Whigg’s Supplication,” we shall finish this chain of authorities by an extract from a work of sober argumentation, in which the following character is given of Presbyterians : “They are naturally rigid and severe, and therefore conclude that God is such a one as themselves.

¹ The Assembly, or Scotch Reformation, a comedy.

² The Assembly, or Scotch Reformation, a comedy, p. 4, and epil.

They damn all who differ from them, and therefore think that God does the same. And because they love themselves, they are pleased to persuade themselves that they are his special favourites. Hence, they conclude, that they owe them no civilities whom God neglects, nor kind offices whom he hates. He neglects and hates all who are not capable of his grace, which none are (say they) who are not of their way. This wicked persuasion sanctifies not only the ill manners, but, which is worse, the ill nature of the party towards all who differ from them. It contradicts the ends of society and government, and is only calculated to advance the private interest of a partial and designing set of men.”¹ In the same work it is shown that the Presbyterian spirit is *enthusiastical*—an *animal* or *mechanical* spirit—a *partial* spirit—a *narrow* and *mean* spirit—a *malicious, unforgiving* spirit—an *unconversible* spirit—a *disloyal, rebellious* spirit—a spirit of *division*—an *unneighbourly, cruel, and barbarous* spirit.²

We have not made these extracts for the purpose of amusing the reader, nor can we be charged with wantonly or unnecessarily exposing the violence of the individuals or the party from whose speeches or writings they have been taken. So far as this may be the consequence of the disclosure, it is chargeable on the aggressor, and not on those who act on the defensive, and who are allowed, nay bound, to make use of every legitimate weapon of defence. In the first place, it is of the greatest consequence, in judging of the truth or falsehood of a charge, to inquire exactly into its origin, and to ascertain the character and probable motives of the person or persons who gave rise to it. And this is still more necessary in the case of general prejudices and vague accusations, which are not supported by reference to specific facts. In the second place, we are of opinion, that the quotations which we have made, while they lead to the source of the calumnies circulated against Presbyterians, at the same time discover the grounds on which they rest, and must dispose every candid person to regard them with the strongest suspicion. For example, when we find Jeffreys and Sacheverell employing the same language in speaking of the friends of civil and religious liberty in England, which Mackenzie and Rhind applied to the Scots Presbyterians and field-preachers, does not this afford a strong presumption, that both were actuated by the same motives, and that, whatever circumstantial differences might exist, the grounds of offence given by the objects of persecution and calumny in the two nations, were radically and substantially the same? In the third place, we have quoted from the very authorities upon which the author of the *Tales* has depended in forming his representation. To these he must be understood as referring, when he tells us, in the enigmatical style of his preliminary discourse, that he has been enabled to “qualify the narratives of Old Mortality and his Cameronian friends by the reports of more than one descendant of ancient and honourable families,—more than

¹ Rhind's *Apology*, p. 208.

² *Ibid.* *passim*.

one non-juring bishop,—here and there a laird or two,—and the game-keepers of these gentlemen ;” for surely he did not intend his readers to understand him as intimating, that he had been guided literally by traditional reports, either on the one side or the other. Lastly, although the author has not brought forward all the charges contained in these extracts, and has in general expressed them in more temperate language, yet was it necessary to give them at large. It was necessary, because almost every one of them will be found to be insinuated or involved in some part of his representation. It was necessary, to show that some of the authors are totally inadmissible as witnesses in this cause, owing to the malice which they discover against the Presbyterians, and the injuries which they had done them. It was necessary, to show that the evidence given by others of them ought to be received *cum nota*, because they discover deep prejudice, and bear testimony to many things which are utterly incredible, or notoriously false. And it was necessary, to put the reader in possession of the notions which they attached to the words *puritanism*, *fanaticism*, and *rebellion*, with which they have so liberally aspersed their adversaries.—We now proceed to a more particular examination of the character which the author of the *Tales* has given of the Covenanters.

And, first, of their *puritanism*. On this topic the author talks quite at ease and, we dare say, never dreamt that his representation would be controverted, or that a single question would be put to him on the subject. Accordingly, in speaking of Presbyterians, the use of the epithets puritanical and precise is just as much a matter of course with him, as it is in the West Indies to speak of whites, mulattoes, and people of colour. We are not among the number of those who are disposed to pay much regard to such names,—we can hear them applied to ourselves with indifference, and condemn the ignorant and uncivil sneer with which they may be accompanied. But we know the influence which they have upon the vulgar, both great and small ; and we beg leave to offer the author an advice or two on this point. *First*, It is not very consistent or becoming in one who has ridiculed the Covenanters for calling their opponents Erastians and Papa-Prelatists, to commit the same fault, by bandying terms which are equally reproachful, and of still more loose and indeterminate signification. *Secondly*, We would advise him not to employ, or, at least, not to repeat names of whose meaning he may not have a distinct and definite idea. We strongly suspect that, if interrogated, his ideas on this subject would be found as vague and shifting as those of the vulgar are respecting the extreme points of north and south. What is it that constitutes a puritan, or wherein does precisianism lie? Does it lie in scrupling to be present at a weaponschaw, and to shoot at a mark? Does it lie in repining at the use of the Common Prayer-Book, the surplice, or the sign of the cross? Or does it consist in laying claim to perfect spotlessness, or in confining saintship within the pale of a particular church or party? If so, let it

be proved that this ever was the sentiment of Presbyterians. Or were they puritans because they pretended to greater strictness in practice than the court and clergy who persecuted them? This, surely, they might do without being "religious overmuch," or proudly arrogating to themselves any uncommon degrees of holiness. Again, we would remind the author, that the injudicious use of this senseless term of opprobrium was in former times productive of the most ruinous consequences to those who were so foolish as to encourage the practice. James, who had unadvisedly applied it to the principles of Presbyterians in his Basilicon Doron, found it prudent to retract the imputation, even after he had ascended the English throne. Charles I. was not equally wise. His parasitical and aspiring clergy were encouraged to load his best subjects with this obnoxious charge, until they filled the parliament and the army with Puritans, and brought the misguided and unhappy monarch to the block. Untutored by adversity, and incapable of reaping instruction from their father's fate, the two sons of Charles pursued the same infatuated course; while they proscribed and persecuted the most sober and conscientious part of the nation as seditious and disaffected persons, they employed hireling preachers, poets, and drolls, to deride them as precise bigots and fanatical knaves; and the result was, that the Stuarts were driven from the throne, and, by their merited misfortunes, proclaimed at last to the world who were the real bigots and fanatics. It is no good omen of the present time that a spirit of the same kind should have been revived.

On this subject we beg leave to quote the words of a sensible author, who wrote immediately before the breaking out of the civil war in England, and who was no Presbyterian. "Let us, then," says he, "a little farther search into the mysterious abuse and misapplication of this word puritan. Those whom we ordinarily call Puritans are men of strict life and precise opinions, which cannot be hated for anything but their singularity in zeale and piety; and certainly the number of such men is too small, and their condition too low and dejected; but they which are the devil's chiefe artificers in abusing this word, when they please, can so stretch and extend the same, that scarce any civil, honest Protestant, which is hearty and true to his religion, can avoid the aspersion of it; and when they list againe, they can so shrink it into a narrow sense, that it shall seem to be aimed at none but monstrous abominable heretickes and miscreants. Thus, by its latitude it strikes generally, by its contraction it pierces deeply, by its confused application it deceives invisibly. Small scruples first entitle me to the name of Puritan, and then the name of Puritan entitles me further to all mischief whatsoever."—"There are many men amongst us now which brooke bishops and ceremonies well enough, and perhaps favourably interpret our late innovations; and yet these may be too grave to escape the name of Puritans. To be a Protestant may be allowed, but to dispute against Papists smells of preciseness; to hold the Pope fallible is tolerated, but to hold him Antichrist is abominable

Puritanisme; to goe to church is fashionable, but to complain of the masse, or to be grieved at the publick countenance of Popery, whereby it entwines our religion, and now drinks up that sap which is scarce afforded to Protestantisme, or at all to take notice how far some of our divines are hereat conniving, if not co-operating, is a symptome of a deepe infected Puritan. He that is not moderate in religion is a Puritan; and hee that is not a Cassandrian, or of Father Francis Syncter's faith, is not moderate; he savours too much of Calvin's grosse learning, exploded now by our finest wits. But I passe from this kinde of Puritan to another, whom I shall call my political Puritan; for the bounds of Puritanisme are yet larger, and inclose men of other conditions. Some there are yet which perhaps disfavours not at all either ecclesiasticall policy, or moderate Papists; and yet, neverthesse, this is not sufficient to acquit them from the name of Puritans, if they ascribe anything to the lawes and liberties of this realme, or hold the prerogative royall to be limitable by any law whatsoever. If they hold not against parliaments and with ship-money, they are injurious to kings; and to be injurious to kings is *proprium quarto modo* to a Puritan.

"This detested odious name of Puritan first began in the Church presently after the Reformation, but now it extends it selfe further, and, gaining strength as it goes, it diffuses its poysonous ignominy further; and being not contented to gangrene religion, ecclesiasticall and civill policy, it now threatens destruction to all morality also. The honest strict demeanour, and civill conversation, which is so eminent in some men, does so upbraid and convince the anti-Puritan, that even honesty, strictnesse, and civility it selfe must become disgracefull, or else they which are contrary cannot remaine in grace. But, because it is too grosse to deride vertue under the name of vertue, therefore other colours are invented, and so the same thing undergoes derision under an other name. The zealous man is despised under the name of zealot, the religious honest man has the vizard of an hypocrite and dissembler put upon him to make him odious. My Lord of Downe professes, that the first thing which made him distest the religion of Puritans (besides their grosse hypocrisie) was sedition. So, grosse hypocrisie, it seems, was the first. What is grosse or visible hypocrisie to the bishop, I know not, for I can see no windowes or casements in men's breasts, neither doe I thinke him indued with St Peter's propheticall spirit, whereby to perceive and search into the reines and hearts of hypocrites; but let him proceed. 'It is a plausible matter,' sayes he, 'with the people to heare men in authority depraved, and to understand of any liberty and power appertaining to themselves. The profession, also, of extraordinary zeale, and as it were contempt of the world, workes with the multitude. When they see men goe simply in the streets, and bow down their heads like a bull-rush, their inward parts burning with deceit, wringing their necks awry, shaking their heads as if they were in some present griefe, lifting up the white of their eyes at the sight of some vanity, giving

great groanes, crying out against this sin and that sinne in their superiours, under colour of long prayers devouring widowes' and married wives' houses; when the multitude heares and sees such men, they are carried away with a great conceit of them; but if they should judge of these men by their fruits, not by outward appearance, they should find them to be very farre from the true religion.' See here the froth of a scurrilous libeller, whereby it is concluded that he that is of severe life, and averse from the common vanities of the time, is an hypocrite. If these descriptions of outward austerity shall not onely show what is an hypocrite, but point out also who is an hypocrite, our Saviour himselfe will hardly escape this description. Doubtless our Saviour, and many of his devoutest followers, did groane, shake their heads, and lift up their eyes at the sight of some publick sins and vanities, and did not spare to taxe the vices of superiours, and to preach too and admonish the meaner sort of the people; yet who but an Annas or Caiphas will infer from hence, that therefore their inward parts burne with deceit, and that their end is meerely to carry away the multitude—such as judge onely by outward appearance, and have not their senses exercised to discern betwixt good and evil?

"'Tis a miserable thing to see how farre this word puritan, in an ethical sense, dilates it selfe. Heretofore it was puritanicall to abstain from small sinnes; but now 'tis so to abstaine from grosse open sinnes. In the mouth of a drunkard, he is a Puritane who refueseth his cups; in the mouth of a swearer, he which fears an oath; in the mouth of a libertine, he which makes any scruple of common sinnes; in the mouth of a rude soldier, he which wisheth the Scotch warre at end without blood. It is sufficient that such men thinke themselves tacitly checked and affronted by the unblameable conversation of Puritans."—"The Papist, we see, hates one kind of Puritans, the hierarchist another, the court sycophant another, the sensual libertine another; yet all hate a Puritan, and under the same name many times hate the same thing. In the yeare of grace 1588, when the Spanish Armado had miscarried, notwithstanding that his Holinesse of Rome had so peremptorily christened it, and as it were conjured for it, one of that religion was strangely distempered at it, and his speech was, as 'tis reported, God himself was turned Lutheran; by which, for certaine, he meant hereticall. 'Tis much therefore that my Lord of Downe, now that Episcopacy is so foiled in Scotland, has not raged in the like manner, and charged God of turning Puritan; but surely, if he has spared God, he has not spared any thing else that is good; and if he has spared to call God Puritan, he has not spared to call Puritan devill. But, to conclude, if the confused misapplication of this foule word puritan be not reformed in England, and that with speed, we can expect nothing but a suddaine universall downfall of all goodnesse whatsoever."¹

The author of the Tales is not more sparing in the use of this term of

¹ A Discourse concerning Puritans, pp. 8, 41, 50, 54, 57. Printed 1641.

reproach, and others of similar import, than his predecessors were. The Puritan whom he exposes, is not one who scruples at a few indifferent ceremonies, or who superciliously condemns all harmless recreations—he is one who refuses conformity to any kind of religion which may be enjoined by his superiors, or who is so squeamish as to stickle at occasionally transgressing the rules of decency, or laws that are vulgarly reckoned divine. Thus he introduces his hero as saying to Burley, “My uncle is of opinion, that we enjoy a reasonable freedom of conscience under the indulged clergymen, and I *must necessarily* be guided by his sentiments respecting the choice of a place of worship for his family. (Vol. ii. p. 92.) This is passive obedience with a witness! to the utter prostration of the rights of conscience, and leading to all the extent of the wicked principle of Hobbes! The disciples of that philosopher boasted of his discovery as calculated to put an end to religious persecution. Yes, it is so; but it is at the expense of banishing all religion and all morality from the world, and reducing man to the level of a brute. Upon this principle, a person not only may, but “must necessarily” be, a Papist at Rome, a Mahomedan at Constantinople, and a Pagan at Pekin; for surely it will not be pleaded, that less obedience is due to the supreme government of a country than to an uncle. If the author really meant what his words natively suggest, and if he intended to express his own sentiments by the mouth of his hero, then we cease to wonder at the partiality which he has shown to an oppressive Government, and his want of sympathy for the objects of persecution. There is another instance to which we must refer as a commentary upon the author’s sentiments respecting puritanism and precision. In describing the scene at Milnwood, when visited by a military party, he informs us, that “the agony of his avarice,” at the thoughts of parting with his money, overcame old Morton’s “puritanic precision.” And how did this appear? By his making use of one of the most vulgar, gross, and indecent words which one can apply to a woman—so indecent, that the author, or his printer, could express it only by giving the initial and final letters, and, when he afterward introduces a trooper as using the same word, judged it fit to drop one of these! (Vol. ii. pp. 189, 243.) *Ex ungue leonem*. Such are the refined and liberal notions of the author of the Tales! It is “puritanic precision” to boggle at an indecent expression; and it argues the same weakness of mind, no question, to scruple at taking the name or word of God in vain. And yet this is the gentleman who complains that the Covenanters wanted “good manners”—who derides the coarse and vulgar dialect of their preachers, and is the advocate for elegant studies and accomplishments!

The author seems to have forgotten that he is not living in the days of Charles II., and that the religion of the Covenanters has now obtained the sanction of the national laws, and is the established religion of his country. We beg leave to inform him, if he does not already know it,

that everything for which the Covenanters contended, both in point of principle and of practice, is contained in the standards of the national Church. These were composed in pursuance of the Solemn League and Covenant by the Assembly of divines, which met at Westminster, under the authority of the Parliament of England, and during the civil war. They explicitly contain the Calvinistic tenets, and the doctrine concerning what he is pleased to denominate "a judaical observance of the Sabbath;" they assert the parity of ministers of the Gospel, in opposition to Prelatic hierarchy; and, in opposition to Erastian encroachments by civil rulers, they assert that Christ is the alone King and Head of His Church, and that He has appointed a government in it distinct from the civil magistrate, who "may not assume to himself the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven." These, according to the author's own showing, embrace all the leading articles which the Covenanters maintained, and for adhering to which they suffered. If, therefore, there is any justice or force in his ridicule, the weight of it must fall upon the established religion of Scotland. It is this which he has all along been deriding under the name of puritanism and precisianism. If he disapproves of it, he is at liberty to do so: let him bring forth his strong reasons, and they shall be examined; but whether it is decent and becoming in him to hold up its principles to derision, as if they were unworthy of serious argument, we shall leave the public to judge, when the cause is fairly before them.

If he shall say, that he has not ridiculed these principles, but merely the conduct of those men who maintained them in former times, — we deny this; and we add, that these constitute the merits of the cause; and, provided they are cleared from misrepresentation, the portion of ridicule which remains in the Tale will turn out to be excessively trifling and childish. What did our Presbyterian ancestors do, but maintain their religious profession, and defend their rights and privileges, against the attempts which were made to wrest these from them? This was the body and front of their offending. And were they not entitled to act this part? Were they not bound to do it? What although, in discharging this arduous duty in times of unexampled trial, they were guilty of partial irregularities, and some of them of individual crimes? What although the language in which they expressed themselves was homely, and appears to our ears coarse, and unsuitable to the subject? What although they gave a greater prominence to some points, and laid a greater stress on some articles, than we may now think they were entitled to? What although they discovered an immoderate heat and irritation of spirit, considering the barbarous and brutal manner in which they had long been treated? What although they fell into parties, and quarrelled among themselves, when we consider the crafty and insidious measures employed by their adversaries to disunite them; and when we can perceive them actuated by honesty and principle, even in the greatest errors into which they were

betrayed? These, granting them to be all true, may form a proper subject for sober statement, and for cool animadversion; but never for turning the whole of their conduct into ridicule, or treating them with scurrilous buffoonery. No enlightened friend to civil and religious liberty—no person, whose moral and humane feelings have not been warped by the most lamentable party prejudices, would ever think of treating them in this manner. They were sufferers—they were suffering unjustly—they were demanding only what they were entitled to enjoy—they persevered in their demands until they were successful—and to their disinterested struggles, and their astonishing perseverance, we are indebted, under God, for the blessings which we enjoy. And we can assure our author, that his statements are not so correct, nor his ridicule so well directed and powerful, as to deter us from their vindication.

We may add, though the observation is of inferior moment, that the author is here guilty of a violation of propriety, in a literary point of view. He has been pleased to send his book into the world as the work of the usher of one of our parochial schools, edited and arranged by his patron, the "schoolmaster and parish-clerk." Now, all our parochial teachers are bound by law to subscribe the Confession of the national Church. Yet the schoolmaster of Gandercleugh publishes, with high encomiums, a work which is intended to ridicule, as puritanical, the principles of that Church of which he is a member, and of those standards to which he is supposed to have given the seal of his approbation. If decorum of character is thus sacrificed to the gratification of a freak, we need not be surprised to find it violated for the sake of gaining higher ends.

But we proceed to consider the charge of *enthusiasm* and *superstitious fanaticism*. The judicious reader will perceive, that several of the remarks already made are applicable to this topic of declamation. We shall separate the charge of superstition from that of fanaticism. There can be no doubt that the author intended to ridicule the superstitious and puritanical preciseness of the Covenanters, by imposing Scripture names upon the fictitious characters of the party that he has introduced. Thus, we have *Silas Morton*, *Gabriel Kettledrummle*, *Ephraim Macbriar*, *Habakkuk Mucklewrath*. He borrowed this from the English plays written in derision of the Puritans. But if he had taken time to examine into the fact, he would have found that the Presbyterians of Scotland were not then addicted to this practice any more than they are at present. This was perhaps beneath his notice, moreover it would have spoilt a great part of his humour; for it is evident that the sound of a name is with him a high point of wit. Of the same species of just ridicule and accurate representation is his practice of making his covenanting interlocutors *thee* and *thou* one another, and withhold the title of Mr from those whom they address, as if they had adopted the precise principle of Quakers on this head! (Vol. iii. p. 152-8, *et passim*.) Yet, in his usual self-contradictory way, he introduces them in other

places as declaiming against Quakerism. This he does, to be sure, to ridicule them as persons who were continually inveighing against all sects but their own; without knowing, or at least without letting his readers know, that they were necessitated to be more explicit in such disavowals, by the artful malice of their adversaries, who imputed the tenets of Quakerism to them, because they refused the ensnaring oaths imposed by Government.

But the author has in reserve a stronger proof of the superstition of the Covenanters, which we may not be able so easily to set aside or evade. They firmly believed that certain men, if not also beasts, were gifted by the enemy of mankind with preternatural means of defence, and that it was impossible to shoot them, at least with lead! While Burley reacted in his dream the bloody scene of Archbishop Sharp's murder, he exclaimed, "Fire-arms will not prevail against him—Strike—thrust with the cold iron." (Vol. ii. p. 123.) But the best description of this trait in the covenanting character is in the account of Claverhouse's behaviour at the battle of Drumclog.

"The *superstitious fanatics*, who looked upon him as a man gifted by the Evil Spirit with supernatural means of defence, averred that they saw the bullets recoil from his jack-boots and buff-coat like hailstones from a rock of granite, as he galloped to and fro amid the storm of the battle. Many a Whig that day loaded his musket with a dollar cut into slugs, in order that a silver *bullet* (such was their belief) might bring down the persecutor of the holy kirk, on whom lead had no power. 'Try him with the cold steel,' was the cry at every renewed charge—'powder is wasted on him.'—Ye might as well shoot at the old enemy himself."—(Vol. iii. p. 69.)

Before replying to this, we shall make the author's case a little stronger. We learn from "*Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence Displayed*," that the Presbyterian preachers made the people believe that "the bishops were all cloven-footed," and that "the generality of the Presbyterian rabble in the west will not believe that bishops have any shadows as an earnest of the substance, for their opposing of covenant work in the land." It is true that Dr Gilbert Rule affirms, that he never before heard that any Presbyterian entertained such a thought. But we shall be more liberal to our author, and shall take it for granted that what he has stated is true. He must be understood, then, as meaning, that the belief of such preternatural powers was peculiar to the Covenanters, else it could be no reason for characterising them as "*superstitious fanatics*." But what will he say, if we can produce the example of a whole parliament at that period gravely giving their sanction to an opinion at least equally incredible? In the attainder of the Marquess of Argyll for high treason, one of the heaviest articles of charge against him is supported by the following miraculous proof: "Insomuch that the Lord from heaven did declare his wrath and displeasure against the aforesaid inhuman cruelty, by striking the tree whereon they were hanged, in the said month of June, being a lively fresh-growing ash

tree, at the kirkyard of Denoone, amongst many other fresh trees with leaves, the Lord struck the same tree immediately thereafter, so that the whole leaves fell from it, and the tree withered, never bearing leaf thereafter, remaining so for the space of two years; which being cut down, there sprang out of the very heart of the root thereof a spring like unto blood popling up, running in several streams, all over the root, and that for several years thereafter, until the said murderers, or their favourers, perceiving that it was remarked by persons of all ranks (resorting there to see the miracle), they did cause hough out the root, covering the whole with earth, which was full of the said matter like blood."¹ If this example does not suffice, we shall give another, from a writer whose principles are akin to those of our author. Mr Scott, in a note to the *Lady of the Lake* after adducing a great number of facts in support of the *Taisch*, or preternatural gift of *Second-Sight*, concludes rather reluctantly, and not without some symptoms of scrupulosity: "But, in despite of evidence, which neither Bacon, Boyle, nor Johnson, were able to resist, the *Taisch*, with all its visionary properties, seems to be now universally abandoned to the use of poetry."² It certainly was not the design of Mr Scott to represent the philosophers to whom he alludes as men of weak and superstitious minds, merely because they had not emancipated themselves from a popular prejudice. And we are inclined to think, that the author of the *Tales* will now be sensible of the rashness of his censure. But if he shall still be disposed stoutly to affirm that the Covenanters were "superstitious fanatics," we shall leave him to contest the point with the shades of "Bacon, Boyle, and Johnson."

"The eagle saw her breast was wounded sore,
She stood and wept much, but grieved more:
But when she saw the dart was feather'd, cried,
Woe's me, for my own kind hath me destroyed."

Among all the terms of reproach which are ordinarily employed to excite contempt or odium against an individual or a party, there are none more vague, or used with less sense and discretion, than enthusiasm and fanaticism. They serve the same purpose against the friends of religion, that sedition and leasing-making have often done against the best friends of the state, when employed by profligate ministers and their base supporters to stigmatise and run down all who oppose their corrupt measures and pernicious plans. Every pert infidel, every superficial sciolist, every conceited witling, every elegant trifler in prose or in verse, thinks he has a right to apply the names of enthusiast and fanatic to persons who are greatly superior to him in intellect, and in all rational and useful information. While such persons "set their mouth against the heavens" in affronting God, "their tongue walketh through the earth" in reviling those who bear his image, who seek to obey Him, and are zealous for his rights and honour. Were they to

¹ Howell's State Trials, vol. v. p. 1384.

² Note vi. to canto first.

think rationally but for a moment, they would be ashamed to "speak evil of the things which they know not." No sensible and modest person will be forward in interposing his judgment as to any art or science of which he is ignorant, which he has not made it his business to study, and for which, instead of having a relish, he may feel a repugnance, especially in relation to a point contested among those of the same profession. And why should it be otherwise in religion, to the obligations and feelings of which there are so many who are notoriously and lamentably insensible and dead? What right can he, who perhaps never looked into the Bible except for the purpose of turning it into a jest-book, who never performed an act of devotion except from hypocrisy or for fashion's sake, who during the whole course of his life never spent a serious moment on the subject of religion,—what right can such a person have, or what capacity has he, to judge between the genuine though ardent emotions of a devout breast, and the reveries and irregular fervours of a heated or disturbed imagination?

Nor is this incapacity confined to those who labour under an absolute destitution of religious principle and feeling. A man may not be blind, and yet he may be incapable to judge correctly of the imitative beauties of the pencil; he may not be deaf, and yet he may have no ear for musical harmony; he may be a parent, a brother, and a citizen, and yet be exceedingly deficient in parental, generous, and patriotic feeling. To such a person, the emotions expressed, the zeal that is testified, the interest that is taken, the sacrifices that are made by the devoted lover of painting, music, kindred, and country, will appear to be disproportioned, extravagant, unreasonable, ridiculous, and, in one word, enthusiastical. And he would say so, provided he was not restrained by habit, or by prudential deference to general feeling, and provided he was taught to correct his erroneous conclusions by attentive observation, and the rigid exercise of his reasoning powers. Let a person whose ear is not attuned to harmony join a company of musical innamoratos—let him listen to them while they converse in the dialect peculiar to their art, and while they give an unrestrained vent to their emotions—let him attentively observe them while they are enjoying the indescribable charms of the full and varied concert—let him mark their gestures—the expressions of their countenance—the signs of ravishment which they exhibit, while they now lift up their eyes to the heavens, as if they were totally abstracted from sublunary things, and anon quench and seal up their visual orbs, as if they were determined never again to open them to the light of day—the tremulous thrill which pervades and agitates their whole frame—their soft susurrations, gradually rising into more audible murmurs, or abruptly bursting into an ecstatic peal—the languishing attitudes in which they throw themselves, and their dying falls—not to mention the grimaces, the contortions of feature, the antic airs and gesticulations, or the whining tones which some of them are accustomed to assume;—let the spectator who has no accordant

or sympathetic feeling, and who has never thought seriously on the subject, observe all this, and let him express his genuine sentiments, and we have no doubt that they will correspond to the statement which we have given.—But we must leave it to the intelligent reader to apply this illustration to the expressions of devout feeling and evangelical experience, under the modifications which the nature of the subject will suggest.

Do we, then, deny that there was any enthusiasm or fanaticism among the Covenanters? We do not. None who is acquainted with human nature, or with the history of mankind and of the Church, would expect this in the circumstances in which they were placed. We know that, during the latter part of the persecution, a small sect arose called Gibbites, or Sweet Singers, whose opinions and practices were in a high degree extravagant and impious; but they were disowned by the whole body of Presbyterians, were always few in number, and soon melted away. And it is much to the credit of the people of Scotland, in point of intelligence and soundness of religious principle, that not only at this time, when their spirits were much heated, but also during the interregnum, when innumerable sects, many of them holding the most fantastic opinions, sprung up in the neighbouring kingdom, none of these appeared (a few converts to Quakerism excepted) in this country. We know also, that, after the battle of Bothwell Bridge, a number of Presbyterians, under the conduct of Cameron and Cargill, proceeded formally to disown the government, and advanced opinions respecting the essential qualifications of magistrates in a reformed land, and respecting the extraordinary execution of justice by private individuals, which were unjustifiable and dangerous. But if we examine the matter with candour, we will find that they were driven to these extremes by the intolerable oppression of government; and that their errors proceeded from their understandings being perplexed by intricate questions, which were in some respects forced upon them, in circumstances certainly not favourable to cool and dispassionate investigation, and not at all, as their adversaries alleged, from principles of disloyalty and insubordination, or any desire to gratify their passions, by involving the nation in anarchy and blood. We will find them retracting, explaining, or modifying their declarations, or particular expressions in them, which were most obnoxious to blame, or of whose dangerous tendency they became convinced—a behaviour no way resembling that of fanatics, who are inflamed by contradiction, and plunge from one excess into a greater. In fine, they were in other respects, as a body, sober and pious men, desirous of living peaceably, and who afterwards did live peaceably under a government which knew how to treat them with lenity. “Oppression makes a wise man mad,” but it does not convert him into a madman; as the torture does not make an honest man a liar, although it may extort from him a falsehood. Let the violent pressure which, for the moment, overcame him, be removed, and he will return to his wonted

sobriety and self-command, and act like any other man. Besides, the followers of Cameron formed but a very small part of the Covenanters of Scotland.

With respect to the field-preachers in general, and those who adhered to them, it may be allowed that their religious feelings were wound up to a high pitch. Everything in their situation contributed to produce this effect,—the sufferings that they had endured—the dangers to which they were exposed—the jeopardy in which their life stood every hour—the hairbreadth escapes which they made—the wild scenery of the spots on which they assembled to perform their religious services, with the many affecting recollections with which it was associated—all served to raise their minds to an uncommon degree of fervour. But still this was not enthusiasm in the bad sense of the expression. It was a high tone of excitement which has been felt by the noblest, the purest, and the most enlightened minds—by patriots, who have stood forth, in times of danger, to defend the injured rights of their country; and by confessors, who have been raised up, in times of defection, to plead for the more sacred rights of their God. Such were the feelings of the Prophet when, in similar circumstances, he said, “I have been VERY JEALOUS for the Lord God of Hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword, and I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to take it away.” Weaknesses or excesses are often mingled with the best and most pious feelings—the exercise of Elijah was not exempted from these—but still they are too sacred to be rudely touched by the profane hand. How differently does the same subject affect different minds! The author of *The Sabbath* selected the character of the Covenanters for the warmest encomium; the author of “The Tales” has fixed on it as deserving the most unsparing censure. To the eye of the former, a conventicle presented a subject for the finest poetic description; in the eye of the latter, it is an object of derision and merriment. The former viewed it as an assembly of men who were met to worship God according to the dictates of their conscience, at the peril of all that was dear to them on earth; the latter can see nothing in it but a tumultuary gathering of discontented and fiery spirits, held in defiance of law, and with the intention of resisting the lawful exercise of authority. The former describes the field-preachers as dividing “the bread of life” to their hearers, and administering to them those heavenly consolations which were peculiarly adapted to the situation of hardship and peril in which they were placed; the latter represents them as fosterers of the wildest fanaticism, and trumpeters of sedition and rebellion. The former was charmed with the ardent and sincere piety that breathed from the lips of the speaker, and beamed on the delighted countenances of his hearers, as “o’er their souls his accents soothing came;” the latter seeks entertainment by discovering matter for ridicule in the preacher’s tones and gestures, and in the coarse garb and humble appearance of the greater part of his

audience. The picture exhibited by the former is solemn, pleasing, and deeply interesting ; that which is held out by the latter is mean, vulgar, and disgusting. Both cannot be genuine representations. No one will doubt, for a moment, which of the two displays the finest feelings in the artist ; and whether the poet or the humourist has kept most closely to the truth of nature, may appear in some degree from what follows.

The character given of the Covenanters, in the persons of Mause and Kettledrummy, is in a style of such glaring and extravagant caricature, that we would not have deemed it necessary to notice such misrepresentations, farther than by expressing our astonishment that any writer should have risked his reputation by publishing them, had it not been that we are aware of the ignorance that prevails on this subject, even with many who are otherwise well-informed persons. On this account we condescend to enter on the subject. The author's ridicule turns chiefly upon the following points :—that their ordinary conversation was interlarded with Scripture phrases—that they were guilty of gross and ludicrous misapplications of these—that they were constantly harping upon certain cant phrases, expressive of their party-opinions, or relating to their ecclesiastical disputes—and that the style in which their preachers usually indulged was mean, coarse, incoherent, and rhapsodical.

The people of Scotland, since the Reformation, have been always well acquainted with their Bible, and it was the natural consequence of this that its language should mingle with their speech, and give a tone to their conversation and mode of thinking. This, instead of being discreditable, is highly honourable to them, and has contributed, more than many are aware of, to raise their character, in point of intelligence, above that of the lower orders in any other country. Strangers have remarked the fact, and have been astonished at it, while they were ignorant of the cause. A ploughman in Scotland is not, what he is everywhere else, a clown, according to the idea which that term usually suggests ; and this distinction he owes chiefly to his familiar acquaintance with his Bible, which he has been accustomed to read, or to hear read, from his childhood. When he has been so much indebted to it, why should he be hindered from quoting it, or exposed to ridicule for employing its phraseology, provided this is done without an intention or a tendency to burlesque or profane it ? With this qualification, we may assert that the Bible is to the common people what the writings of Homer are to the learned ; and every person of good feeling will be as much pleased to hear them adopting a phrase, or quoting a verse, with propriety, from the Scriptures, as to hear a person of literature making the same use of the Greek or Roman classics. By *propriety* we mean, not elegance and point, but such justness as may be expected from persons in their condition. Among the better informed part even of the English nation, during the 17th century, Scripture language was so far from being uncommon, that we find it used very liberally in both Houses of Parliament. The speech of Lord Falkland on the question

respecting Episcopacy, and of Lord Shaftesbury respecting the state of Scotland, in which he not only quoted, but commented on a passage in the Song of Solomon, are well-known proofs of this.¹ Nor is the practice altogether gone into desuetude in the present time, among persons who would not take it well to be ranked with enthusiasts or fanatics. We could mention more than one of our modern poets who have borrowed some of their finest passages from the Bible, and made their descriptions "more impressive by the orientalism of Scripture," although they have not thought it proper to make those acknowledgments of the debt which they are forward to render to every old ballad or musty play. Our Poet Laureate, too, can scarcely compose three sentences in prose without a Scripture phrase or allusion. And his example has been imitated of late among ourselves, accompanied with an evident attempt to excel him in this quality of style. In the following extracts, we have specimens of *typical*, *allegorical*, and *prophetical* applications,—an enumeration which nearly comprises all the senses of Scripture allowed by Popish interpreters. "It seemed that Buonaparte, on his retirement to Elba, had carried away with him all the offences of the French people, like the scape-goat which the Levitical law directed to be driven into the wilderness, laden with the sins of the children of Israel."² "Still, from the disaffection of the soldiers, and the discontent of the Revolutionists, there arose, even in the halcyon months of the restoration, a cloud on the political horizon, at first as small as that seen by the prophet from Mount Carmel, but which ceased not to increase, until the Monarch of France, like the King of Israel of old, betook himself to his chariot and horses, and was fain to seek for shelter until the storm had passed away."³ "The shower of honour and emoluments fell above, below, and around, but it reached not Sir Thomas Picton, whose name and fortunes, like the fleece of Gideon, remained unmoistened by the dew that distilled on all others."⁴ After speaking of the miserable result of all that has been done for Spain, the author adds, "But deeply convinced, as we are, that as yet '*the end is not*,' we proceed to detail those unexpected and deplorable events," &c.⁵ If not intended, it is a striking coincidence that the *Tales of My Landlord* should have appeared so seasonably as an antidote to this disposition to puritanical enthusiasm; and we can scarcely help suspecting, that the sermon of Ephraim Macbriar, in particular, is a concealed satire upon the following passage of an Address of the City of Edinburgh:—"It is with far other thoughts, and far happier prospects, that we now again lay our duty at the feet of your Royal Highness, with feelings which can be likened to none but those of the survivors of the primeval world, when, looking forth from the vessel in which they had been miraculously preserved, they perceived that God had closed,

¹ Rushworth, vol. i. part 3, p. 182. Wodrow, vol. ii. App. No. 4.

² Edinburgh Annual Register, vol. vii. p. 290.

³ Ibid. vol. vii., p. 293.

⁴ Ibid., p. 255.

⁵ Ibid. p. 317.

in His mercy, the fountains of the deep which He had opened in His wrath ; that the wind had passed over the waters and assuaged the force ; while the reappearance of ancient and well-known mountains and land-marks, hidden so long under the billows of the inundation, warranted a just and purer confidence that the hour of its fury had passed away."¹

But perhaps the fault of the Covenanters did not lie in their liberal use of Scripture, but in the unnatural, extravagant, and ridiculous applications which they made of it. We are afraid that it will be difficult to exculpate some of the extracts which we have given above from this charge ; and it would be easy for us to produce recent examples of a still more glaring kind. What would the reader think of a passage of Scripture relating to the redemption of mankind, and the exaltation of our Saviour, being formally applied to the conclusion of the late war, and the restoration of the Bourbons ? Yet this has been done by one who is neither a Whig nor a Presbyterian.² With respect to the ludicrous perversions of Scripture by the Covenanters, they are the pure fictions of the author of the Tales. We do not recollect to have anywhere met with a more barefaced attempt to impose upon the public. All unprejudiced persons, even those who have no favour for Presbyterians, have been obliged to admit the exaggeration ; and those who are acquainted with the subject know that, with the exception of a few phrases which have been gathered from the books of the Covenanters, and inserted as best served the author's purpose, the whole representation is fanciful and false. We have particularly in our eye at present the speeches put into the mouth of Mause and the preacher on the road to Loudon hill ; although the remark is by no means confined to that scene. We have selected it because it affords us an opportunity of bringing the author's statement to the test, and enabling the reader to judge of its truth or falsehood. Two years after the period to which the Tales relate, when persecution had inflamed the minds of the sufferers to a much higher degree, two women, who had embraced the sentiments of Cameron and Cargill, were executed at Edinburgh. Let the reader peruse their examinations and dying speeches, which are preserved, and compare them with the speeches and behaviour of Mause, and he will perceive at once the truth of our averment.³ The language of these sufferers is such as might be expected from unlettered females, but it is such as does not disgrace the common people of Scotland. The inquisitorial interrogatories of the court discovered that they had imbibed one or two opinions of an extravagant and dangerous nature ; but their manner of avowing these was sober, and even dignified, compared with the behaviour of their judges and accusers. The following is part of the examination of Isabel Alison, written by her own hand with an artless

¹ Address of the City of Edinburgh to the Prince Regent, in December 1813.

James Walker, St Peter's Chapel, Edinburgh, 7th July 1814.

² Sermon on Psalm cxviii. 23. By the Rev.

³ Cloud of Witnesses, pp. 77, 78.

simplicity. "The bishop said, Wherein is our doctrine erroneous? I said, That was better debated already than a poor lass could debate it. They said, Your ministers do not approve of these things; and ye have said more than your ministers; for your ministers have brought you on to these opinions, and left you there. I said, They had cast in baits among the ministers, and harled them aside; and although ministers say one thing to-day, and another to-morrow, we are not obliged to follow them in that. Then they said they pitied me; for (said they) we find reason and a quick wit in you; and they desired me to take it to advisement. I told them, I had been advising on it these seven years, and I hope not to change now. They inquired, mockingly, if I lectured any? I answered, Quakers used to do so. They asked if I did own Presbyterian principles? I answered, that I did. They asked if I was distempered? I told them I was always solid in the wit that God had given me. Lastly, they asked my name. I told them if they had staged me they might remember my name. Then they caused bring *Sanquhair Declaration*, and the paper found on Mr Richard Cameron, and the papers taken at the Queen's Ferry, and asked if I would adhere to them? I said I would, as they were according to the Scriptures, and I saw not wherein they did contradict them. They asked if ever Mr Welsh or Mr Riddell taught me these principles? I answered, I would be far in the wrong to speak anything that might wrong them. Then they bade me take heed what I was saying, for it was upon life and death that I was questioned. I asked them if they would have me to lie. I would not quit one truth though it would purchase my life 1000 years, which ye cannot purchase, nor promise me an hour. They said, When saw ye the two Hendersons and John Balfour? Seeing ye love ingenuity, will ye be ingenuous and tell us if ye saw them since the death of the bishop. I said, They appeared publicly within the land since. They asked if I conversed with them within these 12 months? at which I kept silence. They urged me to say either Yes or Nay. I answered, Yes. Then they said, Your blood be on your own head; we shall be free of it. I answered, So said Pilate; but it was a question if it was so: but ye have nothing to say against me but for owning of Christ's truths and His persecuted members; to which they answered nothing. Then they desired me to subscribe what I owned. I refused, and they did it for me."¹ We have appealed to a case the most favourable to our author, in order that we might prove, *a fortiori*, the falsity of his representation; for otherwise we do not allow that the principles of these women afford a fair specimen of those which were held by the great body of the Covenanters who attended field conventicles at the period to which the Tales refer.

We can bring the matter to a still more direct and decisive test, with respect to the character of Gabriel Kettledrummle. Under this name there can be no question that the author had his eye upon Mr John King. For we know, from his history, that he was the minister taken

¹ Cloud of Witnesses, p. 78-80.

prisoner by Claverhouse on the morning of the battle of Drumclog, led as a prisoner to the field, and released by the victorious Covenanters in the manner described by the author. Now, King was again taken prisoner after the battle of Bothwell, and was executed ; and we have an account of his trial, and the speech which he wrote and delivered before his death.¹ The perusal of these will convince every reader that the author has been guilty of most inexcusable and outrageous misrepresentation. The author describes him as one of the *boute-feus* of the party, as inflaming the multitude to the highest pitch, defending "the mingled ravings of madness and atrocity," and supporting those who insisted on disowning the authority of Charles.—(Vol. iii. pp. 102, 162, 178, 188 ; iv. 10.) Contrast with this the following declaration by King immediately before his execution : "The Lord knowes, who is the Searcher of hearts, that neither my designe nor practice was against his Majesty's person and just government, but I alwayes intended to be loyal to lawful authority in the Lord. I thank God my heart doth not condemne me of any disloyalty ; I have been loyal, and do recommend it to all to be obedient to higher powers in the Lord. And that I preached at field-meetings, which is the other ground of my sentence, I am so far from acknowledging that the Gospel preached that way was a rendezousing in rebellion (as it is termed), that I bless the Lord that ever counted me worthy to be a witness to such meetings, which have been so wonderfully countenanced and owned, not only to the conviction, but even to the conversion of many thousands ; yea, I do assert, that if the Lord hath had a purer church and people in this land than another, it hath been in and among these meetings in fields and houses, so much now despised by some, and persecuted by others. That I preached up rebellion and rising in armes against authority, I bless the Lord my conscience doth not condemn me in this, it never being my designe ; if I could have preached Christ and salvation in His name, that was my work, and herein have I walked according to the light and rule of the word of God, and as it did become (though one of the meanest) a minister of the Gospel. I have been looked on by some, and misrepresented by others, that I have been of a divisive and factious humour, and one that stirred up division in the Church ; but I am hopeful that ye will give me charity, being within a little to stand before my Judge, and *I pray the Lord that He will forgive them that did so misrepresent me* : But I thank the Lord, whatever men did say of me concerning this, I have often diswaded from such wayes, and of this my conscience bears me witness." His last words were : "Now I bid farewell with all my friends and dear relations. Farewel, my poor wife and child, whom I leave on the good hand of Him who is better than seven husbands, and will be a father to the fatherless. Farewel, all creature comforts, and welcome everlasting life, everlasting glory, everlasting love, and everlasting praise. Bless the Lord, O my soul,

¹ Naphtali, p. 466, edit. 1693. Wodrow, vol. ii., p. 83-86.

and all that is within me.”¹ If it should be alleged that the author did not intend to confine himself to a description of the character of King, this shift will avail little. For Mr Kid, another minister who suffered along with him, expressed himself in the same terms.² Nay, of all the ministers who were at Bothwell (and there were at least fourteen there), there were not above two who differed from Mr King in this respect, and the high and violent measures proposed were urged chiefly by a few private gentlemen, and especially by Robert Hamilton, a forward young man, who had got himself introduced to the chief command of the Covenanting army. We may afterward advert to this fact more particularly, but we cannot omit at present calling the attention of our readers to it, because it is of very considerable importance; and it has, we apprehend, been misstated, not only by the author of the Tales, but also by several of our historians.

Even when the author wished to relieve his picture, and intended to describe individuals among the Covenanters as displaying some talent, or possessing some good qualities, he has blundered and betrayed his ignorance. Thus, in the sermon of Macbriar, he has made the preacher utter a sentiment which was universally rejected by Presbyterians, while he makes him tell his audience,—“Whoso will *deserve* immortal fame in this world, and *eternal happiness* in that which is to come, let them enter into God’s eternal service,” &c.—(Vol. iii. p. 110.) A similar breach of decorum of character occurs in his description of the humane Covenanter, Widow Maclure, whom he introduces as repeatedly bann-ing and mincing oaths in her conversation!—(Vol. iv. pp. 275, 278, 281.) Far be it from us to derogate from the talents of our great author; but the truth is (and he should have been aware of it), whatever talent a person may possess for buffoonery, he will not succeed in mimicking those with whose manners he is unacquainted. He has seen and conversed with old gentlewomen of Tory principles, gallant officers, drunken soldiers, butlers and innkeepers; but he has not fallen into the company of religious people; and, accordingly, he has failed completely in taking off their likeness, and in imitating their language and manners. To cull a few phrases from Scripture, and scraps from this sermon and that dying speech, and to form the whole into a cento, has doubtless something ludicrous in it; and we do not question that it will move the laughter of the good friends whom the author professes himself to have been so much indebted to for his materials, as well as the surviving old maidens of the ever-memorable *Forty-five*, especially if he should himself recite it in that snuffling, whining, canting tone which Judge Jeffreys erst acted so admirably in the Court of King’s Bench. But we can scarcely persuade ourselves that he ever seriously thought it would pass in the world either for wit or humour. If the persons whom he intended to expose were to rise up and be desired to

¹ Naphtali, pp. 468-470, 476.

² Ibid., p. 458.

look upon their picture, they would smile at his failure, provided it were possible for them not to be shocked at his profaneness.

We have declined hitherto calling the author to account for his profane use of the Sacred Writings, because we wished, before doing this, to show that our censure did not proceed from displeasure at his wit, and to anticipate an apology which we knew would be made for his conduct. It is frequently urged, that such freedoms with sacred subjects are necessary to preserve propriety of character; and it may be alleged on the present occasion, that the author has only represented the abuse which was made of Scripture by the Covenanters, and that they, and not he, must be answerable for the profanation. We cannot admit the justice of this apology. Those who talk most about sustaining propriety of character, can neglect it on very slight occasions. It is no plea for indecency, and why should it be so for profaneness? There may sometimes be a propriety in exposing the extravagant and ridiculous misapplications of Scripture made by individuals, or by a religious sect; but we do not know that this can ever be justifiably done in a work for amusement, intended for all classes of readers, and ordinarily perused in a state of mind which unfits persons for discriminating between the abuse and the thing abused, and for coolly judging whether the author's ridicule is well or ill founded. The author of the *Tales* has placed at the head of one of his chapters a quotation from the *Alchemist*, which we presume he regarded as a prototype and authority. We beg leave to quote, as well worthy of his attention on this subject, the opinion of one whose authority stands deservedly high both in law and in morality. "I remember," says Lord Chief Justice Hale, "that when Ben Jonson, in his play of the *Alchymist*, introduced Anartus in derision of the Puritans, with many of their phrases taken out of Scripture, in order to render that people ridiculous, the play was *detested* and *abhorred*, because it seemed to reproach religion itself; but now, when the Presbyterians were brought upon the stage in their peculiar habits, and with their distinguishing phrases of Scripture exposed to the laughter of spectators, it met with approbation and applause."¹

¹ Neal's History of the Puritans, vol. iv. p. 440. The excess to which profaneness and blasphemy were carried in the days of Charles II., we could scarcely credit, were it not attested by the most unexceptionable authority. And all under the pretext of withstanding fanaticism! A letter from Dr John Wallis to the Hon. Mr Boyle, giving an account of the opening of Archbishop Sheldon's theatre at Oxford, contains the following particulars: "Then a letter of thanks to be sent from the University to him, wherein he is acknowledged to be both our *creator* and *redeemer*, for having not only built a theatre for the act, but, which is more, *delivered the blessed Virgin from being so profaned for the future*: He doth (as the words of the letter are) *non tantum condere, hoc est creare, sed etiam redimere*. These words (I

confess) stopped my mouth from giving a *placet* to that letter when it was put to the vote. I have since desired Mr Vice-chancellor to consider, whether they were not liable to a just exception. He did at first excuse it: but, upon further thoughts, I suppose he will think fit to alter them, before the letter be sent and registered. After the voting of this letter, Dr South (as university orator) made a long oration; the first part of which consisted of satirical invectives against Cromwell, fanatics, the royal society, and new philosophy. The next of encomiasticks; in praise of the archbishop, the theatre, the vice-chancellor, the architect, and the painter. The last of execrations; against fanatics, conventicles, comprehension, and new philosophy; damning them *ad inferos, ad gehennam*. The oration being ended,

But we are under no necessity of having recourse to this argument in the present case. The author is guilty of wantonly abusing Scripture, not in a few but in numerous instances throughout his work, without his being able to justify himself by an appeal to the practice of the Covenanters. We may refer to the exclamations of Mause (vol. iii. p. 77), and to Langcale's summoning the castle of Tillietudlem "with the but-end of a sermon," by "uplifting, with a stentorian voice, a verse of the 24th Psalm," in metre, which is given at length. (Vol. iii. p. 143.) Such descriptions are quite out of nature, and so extravagant as to be mere ludicrous applications of Scripture language, such as no person who had any due reverence for it could indulge in, and as will give pleasure to an infidel reader, not because they afford a true or spirited delineation of character, but because they gratify his disposition to laugh at the Bible. Still worse, if possible, are the exclamations put into the mouths of Mause and Kettledrummle on approaching Drumclog. (Vol. iii. pp. 32, 33.) The prostitution of Scripture in the first of these instances, is accompanied with a display of great want of delicacy and feeling for an old woman in the circumstances described; and, in the last instance, it is aggravated by the consideration, that the words used are part of a description expressly and repeatedly applied in the New Testament to the sufferings of the Saviour of men. We believe that the author was not aware of this; but what stronger proof can be given of his rashness in intruding into things which he knows not, and undertaking a task which he is incapable of performing well? He tells us, that "these exclamations" of the two prisoners, "excited shouts of laughter among their military attendants; but events soon occurred which rendered them all sufficiently serious." He no doubt expected that his description would excite similar shouts of laughter among his readers; and we have only to express our wish, that he may soon seriously reflect on the subject, and expunge those passages from his work, which otherwise will remain as a stain upon it, which all the applause of the thoughtless and unprincipled will not be able to cancel.

"But what do you say to the charge against the covenanting preachers, and the coarse, vulgar, and incoherent strain of their sermons?" We say that we are not ashamed of them. We say, that if we had been then alive, we would have been among their hearers. We say that the Presbyterians in general were incomparably the best preachers at that time in Scotland. And with respect to such of them as were forced to preach in the fields, we think we can say enough to silence the silly clamour which has been raised as to their sermons. Who would require polish, or expect accurate and laboured composition, from men who were driven from their homes, and destitute of all accommodations; who were obliged to remove from one part of the country

some honorary degrees were conferred, and the convocation dissolved. The afternoon was spent in panegyrick orations and reciting of poems in several sorts of verse,

composed in praise of the archbishop, the theatre, &c., and crying down fanaticks." —Neal's History of the Puritans, vol. iv. pp. 442, 443.

to another, to escape the unremitting search of their persecutors ; who durst not remain above one night in a house, and had often to conceal themselves in woods and caverns ? The covenanting preachers were not in the habit of preaching extempore ; they maintained no such principle as that the extraordinary aids of the Spirit rendered study or preparation unnecessary ; but they would have acted a criminal and a weak part, if, in the circumstances in which they were then placed, they had refused to preach upon premeditation, or even extemporaneously, provided an unexpected opportunity offered itself. The conventicles were a principal means of preserving the cause of religion and liberty in this country ; and it was of the greatest consequence that they should be maintained. It has been well said, that when the banners which the field preachers kept waving on the mountains of Scotland, and which, when dropped by one, were taken up and displayed by another, were descried in Holland, they convinced William that the spirit of freedom and of resistance was not extinct, and encouraged him to hazard the attempt which issued in the deliverance of Britain. Contracted and “ cold are the selfish hearts ” which can perceive nothing to admire in the conduct of such men, and which can only indulge in puling complaints that their sermons did not display good taste, and were devoid of elegant frippery. Such as excel most in these superficial accomplishments, are often deficient in firmness and fortitude, and are ready to act the part of those effeminate soldiers who deserted their colours lest the sword of the enemy should disfigure their pretty countenances. Had they been present, the dread of concealed informers, or apprehensions of the approach of the military, would have dissipated all the fine flowers of rhetoric which they had collected, and made “ their tongue to cleave to the roof of their mouth.” These were not the men for the times. It was not elegant diction, apt similes, well-turned periods, or elaborate reasonings, that the people who frequented conventicles needed. They needed to be taught the Word of God, to be confirmed in the truths for which they were called to suffer, and to have their minds prepared for that death with which they were daily threatened. What they wanted they obtained from their preachers, to whom they listened with emotions of delight, and with a tone of high feeling, to which those who ignorantly deride them have no pulse that beats responsive.

“ In solitudes like these
Thy persecuted children, SCOTIA, foil’d
A tyrant’s and a bigot’s bloody laws :
There, leaning on his spear,——
The lyart veteran heard the Word of God,
By CAMERON thundered, or by RENWICK poured
In gentle stream.

“ Over their souls
His accents soothing came,—as to her young
The heathfowl’s plumes, when at the close of eve
She, mournful, gathers in her brood, dispersed

By murderous sport, and o'er the remnant spreads
Fondly her wings ; close nestling 'neath her breast
They cherished cower amid the purple blooms."

We do not admit that the sermons of the field preachers were ridiculously mean and incoherent. If this had been the case, we do not believe that our Melvilles, our Crawfords, our Cardrosses, our Loudons, our Maxwells, our Cesnocks, our Polwarts, and our Jerviswoods, gentlemen of good education, and some of them possessed of very cultivated minds, would have countenanced them, and subjected themselves to fines for hearing them preach, or allowing them to preach in their houses. The field preachers had all received a liberal education ; several of them were gentlemen by birth,¹ and others of them are known to have been highly respectable for their talents. One of the first acts of William, after he was established on the throne, was to appoint Mr Thomas Hog, whom he had known in Holland, one of his chaplains, and Mr Forrester was about the same time made a professor in one of our universities. The sermons preached at conventicles which are ordinarily circulated, are a very unsafe rule by which to judge of the talents of the preachers, and the quality of the discourses which they actually delivered. We have never been able to ascertain that one of these was published during the lifetime of the author, or from notes written by himself. They were printed from notes taken by the hearers, and we may easily conceive how imperfect and inaccurate these must often have been. We have now before us two sermons by Mr Welsh, printed at different times ; and upon reading them, no person could suppose that they were preached by the same individual. The one has little substance, and abounds with exclamations and repetitions ; the other is a sensible and well-arranged discourse, and free from the faults of the other. We have no doubt that the memory of Mr Peden has been injured in the same way. The collection of prophecies that goes under his name is not authentic ; and we have before us some of his letters, which place his talents in a very different light from the idea given of them in what are called his Sermons and his Life. It was natural, though injudicious, in well-meaning people, after the Revolution, to publish whatever came in their way, bearing to have been preached or spoken by men whom they revered so highly for their zeal, piety, faithfulness, and constancy in suffering. And it is well known, that many eminent persons have suffered severely in their reputation from similar conduct on the part of their warm and rash admirers. We do not mean by this to retract what we formerly conceded, nor to deny that some of the field preachers indulged in a style too familiar and colloquial, and were apt to employ phrases and comparisons which suggest ideas that are degrading. But we maintain that this fault was not peculiar to them or to the Presbyterian Church, and that it is less disgusting and

¹ Mr Archibald Riddel, son of Sir Walter Bryce Semple, Mr Blackadder of Tulliallan, Riddel, Mr Gabriel Semple, son of Sir and Mr Fraser of Brae.

less hurtful to the great ends of preaching than either the scholastic pedantry, or the affected finery and florid bombast which have more frequently infected the pulpit, and disfigured the sermons of those who have been most disposed to exclaim against Presbyterian vulgarity.¹

Here we intended to have closed this part of our review, when the *British Critic* for January was put into our hands. This contains a review of the *Tales of my Landlord*, which induces us to make an addition to what we have said on the sermons of the Covenanters. From the known High-Church tone of this journal, we were prepared to expect that the tale of *Old Mortality* would be greeted by its conductors with a cordial and affectionate welcome, and that they would be prepared at once to subscribe to all its statements, and to become the heralds of its praises. They have even outdone our expectations; for they have improved upon the author's representation, and have pointed out the practical application of his instructions to the present times, which he was either not aware of, or too prudent and too modest to notice. After a circumstantial account, "collected from the best historians," of the assassination of Archbishop Sharp,— "a murder which, for cowardice and cruelty, has scarcely a parallel in the history of the civilised world,"—the dispassionate and well-informed critic goes on to say: "Emboldened by the success of their first enterprise in blood, they began to *preach* (for all their leaders were preachers) *the general assassination of their enemies, and every pulpit rang with the examples of Jael and Sisera, of Ehud and Eglon.*" The Duke of Monmouth "met them on Bothwell Bridge in full force, their army being now increased to 8000 men. *After a desperate resistance they were repulsed,*" &c. "Such was the rebellion, of which the tale of *Old Mortality* is an historical sketch." Having given various extracts from the tale, in which the anecdote respecting "the barn fanners" is not forgotten, and having panegyricised Claverhouse, whose character is said to be "drawn with no less spirit than fidelity," the critic makes the following general remarks, to which we beg the particular attention of our readers:—

"In times like these, when the spirit of fanaticism is abroad, and gathering the most fearful strength, the tale before us will be read with a deep and a foreboding interest. With the Bible in the one hand, and the sword in the other, did these wretched victims of enthusiasm march forth to slaughter and to blood. Fraud, rapine, and murder, in their minds, were consecrated by the cause in which they were engaged, and by the Gospel, under whose banners they supposed themselves enlisted. To the knowledge of Christ, like the fanatics of modern days, they laid an exclusive claim, and that claim they enforced by the breach of every command of charity and love which their heavenly Master so earnestly inculcated.

"To many of our readers, the sermons and speeches which these volumes contain, may appear a caricature rather than a portrait. We can assure them, however, that they are a very faithful transcript of the cant of those times. We have now before us a book published in 1719, entitled '*Scotch Presbyterian Eloquence,*'

¹ We had formerly occasion to make some remarks on this subject.—*Christian Instructor*, vol. vii. p. 415-417.

&c., another of nearly the same date, called 'A Century of Presbyterian Preachers,' in which will be found many discourses of the same nature. In the latter of these, extracts are given from *published sermons*, a few of which we will present to our readers."—(P. 94.)

Having given short extracts from two or three sermons preached before the Long Parliament, the critic adds :—

"From these few specimens of *real* covenanting eloquence, our readers will not imagine the picture before them to be a distortion or a caricature ; the portrait is executed by too faithful and too well instructed a pen."

—"We must pronounce it to be a tale, which, from the spirit of the composition, the truth of the colouring, and the warning which it holds out to this church and nation, demands a most serious and attentive consideration."—(Pp. 95, 97.)

If there are any of our readers who doubted as to the pernicious tendency of the Tales, or as to the propriety of the notice which we have taken of them, the extracts which we have now given must have removed their doubts. Here we perceive that the old spirit of malignancy was not dead, but only asleep, and ready to spring up whenever the least encouragement was given to it. The war-whoop is sounded against fanaticism—the fanatics of former times are identified with those of the present day—and the mad attempt is renewed of accusing persons holding certain religious principles of abetting designs of the worst kind. Before reading this article, we were apprehensive that we had dwelt too long upon some of the topics treated in the preceding pages ; but now we are satisfied that there was need for enlarging instead of retrenchment. We do not mean to expose the gross misrepresentations of historical fact in the review, and we may afterwards have an opportunity of considering the charges affecting the moral character of the Covenanters. At present, we confine ourselves to what the critic says of their sermons. We had previously looked out a number of passages in the sermons of Episcopalians, English and Scots, to set in opposition to the representation which the author of the Tales has given of Presbyterian preaching. But although we were fully aware of the tendency of his work, and the handle that would be made of it, yet, being averse to recrimination, and aware of the delicacy of the subject, we laid them aside, and resolved to suppress them. But after the attack which has been made by the organ of the High-Church party, we consider ourselves as imperiously called upon to bring them forward. It may be of some use in checking their disposition to have recourse to this method of abuse to show them that Episcopalians have preached from the pulpit, and published from the press, things far more unsuitable, ridiculous, extravagant, vulgar, and violent, than ever were uttered by Presbyterian preachers.

We shall begin with the Lord Bishop of London. The following extracts are from a sermon which his Lordship preached, on occasion of the marriage of the Princess Royal, and which accordingly may be supposed to have been none of his worst. The text is Psalm cxxviii. 3 :

"Thy wife shall be as the fruitful vine by the sides of thy house."—*Uxor tua* may well be the subject of the proposition, for it is the subject, the *prior terminus*, the *ὑποκειμενον*, that is substantiall, fundamentall terme of all mankind, *της εις τον βιον εισοδου θυρα*, the gate of entrance into living. Hence began the world: *God builded the woman* (*ædificat costam, finxit hominem*; man was *figmentum*, woman *ædificium*, an artificiall building), and from the rafter or planke of this rib is the world built. Therefore was Heva called *mater viventium*, the mother of the living; *quia mortali generi immortalitatem parit*—she is the meanes to continue a kind of immortalitie amongst the mortall sonnes of men. No sooner was man made, but presently also a woman, not animal *occasionatum*, a creature upon occasion, nor *mas læsus*, a male with maime and imperfection, &c."—"Vir and *uxor*, man and wife, are *primum par, fundamentum parium*, the first original match of all others. All other couples and paires, as father and sonne, maister and servant, king and subject, come out of this paire. The beginning of families, cities, countries, continents, the whole habitable world, the militant, yea and triumphant church, *mater matris ecclesiæ*, the mother of the mother church, of no small part of the kingdome of heaven, is *uxor tua*, this subject of my text, out of this combination, it all springeth. No marriage, no men; no marriage, no saints. *The wife* is the mother of virgins that are no wives (*Laudo connubium quia generat virgines*, saith Hierome, *γυναικομαστιξ*); no generation, no regeneration, no multiplying beneath, no multiplying above; no filling the earth, not so much filling the heavens; if not *filii seculi*, neither will there be *filii cæli*."—"We have found the treasure, wee must adde the cabinet to keep the treasure. *Thy wife*, not *uxor vestra*, one woman to many men, against the doctrine of the Nicolaitans; not *uxores tuæ*, many women to one man, against the encroachment of Lamech; not *uxor tua et non tua*, to take and leave, put on and put off, as thou doest thy coat. *Uxor tua* is as much to say, as *tu et uxor, uxor et tu*, no more, no fewer, no other, &c."—"Sicut *vitis abundans*. If there were nothing more than *sicut*, that word alone might suffice. The woman at her first creation was made to be a *sicut*, &c."—"(*Sicut vitis*.) A tree and a man or a woman, how nearly do they symbolise. The roote of the tree is the mouth to convey it nourishment; the pith or heart of the tree is the matrice, belly, or bowels; the knots, the nerves; the fissures or concavities, the veines; the rinde, the skinne; the boughes, the armes and limms; the sprigges, the fingers; the leaves, the haire; the fruit, unlesse the tree be barren, the children, &c., &c."¹

Our next extracts shall be from "The Merchant Royall," preached at the marriage of a Scots nobleman, the Right Hon. the Lord Hay. The text is Proverbs xxxi. 14: "Shee is like a merchant ship, she bringeth her food from afarre."—"She is like a ship, &c." "Shee is indeed, and yet shee scarce is, and therefore because shee is so scarce, it

¹ *Vitis Palatina*: a sermon appointed to be preached at Whitehall, upon the Tuesday after the Marriage of the Ladie Elizabeth her Grace. By the Bishop of London. 1615.

was needful to show, not onely what shee is, but also what shee is like to; for how shall hee find her that never saw her, that never had her, that scarce heard of her; how shall he find her, but by some sensible resemblance of her? and therefore as Cantic. v., when the Church cried her husband (I charge you, &c.), shee described him by resemblance: *My well beloved is white and ruddie, &c.*: everything was like something, so of the virtuous woman it is said here, that she is like a shippe; and Proverbs xii., shee is like a crowne; and in the Canticles, sometimes like a rose, sometimes like a lilly, sometimes like a spring of waters. In a word, she is like to many thinges; but as it is said, ver. 10, *Pearles and precious stones are not like to her.*—"If she be good, she is like a ship indeed, and to nothing so like as to a shippe; for she sits at the sterne, and by discretion as by carde and compasse shapes her course; her countenance and conversation are ballased with sobernesse and gravitie; her sailes are full of wind, as if some wisdom from above had inspired or blowne upon her; she standeth in the shrowdes, and casteth out her leade, and when she hath sounded, she telleth (as Michol did to David) of depth and danger. If by default she be grounded, she casteth out her ancors (as Rahab did), and by winding of herselfe, shee gets afloat againe. If she spy within her kenning any trouble to bee nigh, either shee makes forward, if shee find herself able, or else, with Pilat's wife, she sets saile away. She commands and countermands each man to his charge, some to their tackling, some to the mast, some to the maine-top; as if shee, and none but shee, were captaine, owner, master of the ship; and yet she is not master, but master's mate. A royall shippe she is, for the king himself takes pleasure in her beauty, Psalm xlv.; and if shee bee a merchant's too, then is shee the merchant royall."—"But of all qualities, a woman must not have one quality of a ship, and that is, too much rigging. Oh, what a wonder it is to see a ship under saile, with her tacklings, and her masts, and her tops and top-gallants; with her upper decks and her neither decks, and so bedeckt with her streames, flags, and ensignes, and I know not what. Yea, but a world of wonders it is, to see a woman created in God's image, so miscreat oftentimes and deformed, with her French, her Spanish, and her foolish fashions, that he that made her, when he lookes upon her, shall hardly know her with her plumes, her fans, and a silken vizard, with a ruffe like a saile, yea, a ruffe like a raine-bow, with a feather in her cap like a flag in her top, to tell (I thinke) which way the wind will blow."—"Shee is like a ship of merchants; therefore first to be reckoned (as yee see) among the laytie; not like a fisherman's boat, not like St Peter's ship, for Christ did call noe she-apostles."—"Shee is like a merchant ship, that is, a friendly fellow and peaceable companion to him, but not a man of war to contend with him. For he that made her never built her for battaile; sure shee was built for peace and not for warre, for merchants weepe to thinke of warre; therefore she must not for every angry word of her husband, betake herself into the gun-roome straight, and there to

thunder, to charge and discharge upon him with broad swords, or as mariners say at sea, to turne the broad side, like Ziporah, the wife of Moses, to raile upon him, 'Thou art indeed a bloody husband.'—Exod. iv. This is no ship of merchants, this is the *Spite*, I thinke," &c.—“But what meaneth Solomon by that, *From a farre, she bringeth her food from a farre*? Surely not to answer that which is proverbially said, that far fetcht and deare bought is fittest for ladies; as now a daies, what groweth at home is base and homely, and what every one eates is meat for dogs; and wee must have bread from one countrie, and drinke from another, and we must have meat from Spain, and sauce out of Italie; and if we weare any thing, it must be pure Venetian, Roman, or Barbarian; but the fashion of all must be French; and as Seneca saith in another case, *victi victoribus leges dederunt*, wee give them the foile, and they give us the fashion. Therefore this was not Solomon's meaning, but *from a farre* either hath respect to the time, a *longinquo tempore*, as it seemeth to be expounded in the very next words, *she riseth while it is yet night, and giveth the portion to her household*, &c. Hee doth not say shee meeteth it at the doore, as shee that riseth to dinner, and then thinkes her daies work halfe done, and for every fit of an idle fever betakes her straight to her cabbins again; and if her finger but ake, shee must have one stand by to feede her with a spoone; this is no ship of merchants, this is the *Mary Slug*,” &c.—“Ladies and gentlemen, I beseech you mistake me not, and impute not partiality to me. If I have said any thing sharply, yet know, I have said nothing against the good, but all against evil women; yea, nothing against the sex, but all against the sinnes of women,” &c.¹

The *Incomparable Jewel* may furnish another specimen of Episcopalian eloquence. In the “Epistle Dedicatorie,” the author says:—“The historicall naration calls for not onely a *Tullian* orator, but for a *Tertullian*, to show it to life; and that requires a just volume too. For if there be a mercuriall quillibet, who can, in his quodlibeticall capacity, comprehend an immensitie, or in his sublimated braine define an infinity, or in his stupendious presumption dares take upon him to relate an *infandum* (and of such an Utopian *minus* I utterly despaire), then may it be as well showed how two minds may breathe in one breast, and one mind may live in two hearts.”

The text is Prov. xxxi. 10: “Who can find a vertuous woman? For her price is farre above rubies.” “The *Quære*, as an inlet, runs into foure rills. The *first* is the indefiniteness of the question: *Who?*—who, I say, among all? *Secondly*, the difficultie of the question: *Who can?* which, albeit, it be difficult, yet it is feasible; for an act tending thereunto is implied, *Who can finde?* which implies seeking. Some by seeking find them *sans question*: the reason is manifest; for the evangelicall precept *seeke*, hath an angelicall promise annexed, *and ye shall*

¹ The Merchant Royall: a sermon preached the Nuptials of the Right Honourable the at Whitehall before the King's Majesty, at Lord Hay and his Lady, upon Jan. 6th, 1607.

finde. *Thirdly*, the subject, or rather object: What? *A Woman.* *Who can finde a woman?* Alas! what more easie to finde than that creature. She is no *Ostium Nili.* Yea, but that's not all. The quality is the question, and that's the knot: *Who can finde a vertuous woman?* which is the fourth rill that the quære runs into."

"The *Quære* is rationally, and discloseth itself into five parcels. For, *first*, God's wisdom resembles her to a jewell in the generall. *Secondly*, to a rubie, in particular. *Thirdly*, in pluralitie, to rubies. *Fourthly*, superlatively, above rubies. *Fiftly* and *lastly*, super-superlatively, farre above rubies. This is the *quære*, and herein I finde pricelesnesse."

"A vitious woman, and death, are two of the bitterest things in the world. The case is all one with the comique conceit. The day that a man marrieth such an one, is all one as if his friend should bid him goe home and hang himselfe. Such a monster as shee is, shall be brought out into the congregation, and examination shall be had of her children; her children shall not take root, and her branches shall bring forth no fruit; a shameful report shall shee leave, and the stinke of her reproach shall not be put out. A vitious woman in her cholerick mood is a *pyromantick* divell; in her melancholy and sullen fits, a *geomantick* hobgoblin; in her phlegmatic disposition, a *hydromantick* hydra; and in her sanguine and best condition, an *aeromantic* mushrome. *Concipit æthera mente; mens levior vento*, tossed up and down with every fancie. I have read of Cardanus his father, how hee conjured up seven divels at once. Hee that marrieth a vitious wife hath no need to send to a conjurer; he shall see the seven deadly sinnes ruling, reigning, and raging in his empousa, as the seven divels in Mary Magdalene, while she was yet no convert. The poor man then hath no remedie but prayer and patience, and fast he must too; for this kinde of divels goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." "Weigh your wives, then, good men, you that have them." "If they prove counterfeit and light, surely they are not pearls but bugles, light every way. In their heels like the corke there; in their heads like the feather in their caps; and in their hands like their foolish fanne. If you meet with such, sing,

Quid levius Pluma? Flamen: quid Flamine? Flamma:
Quid Flamma? Mulier: quid Muliere? o.

"The *Hieroglyphiques* describe and pourtraite a woman sitting upon a shell-snaile, when they would signify a good housewife; for as that creature carries an house upon its back, so the good housewife will keep her house over her head, and stay within doors, unless she have urgent occasions abroad. She is not of the tribe of Gad, to be a gadder abroad caulesly, as commonly they doe who are such gadders, and come home crackt, as did wandering Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, when shee went gadding to see the fashions of the country."

"Doe you thinke that you are vertuous women in these and such like fantasticks? Or when you get upon one joynt of your least finger,

a sardonix, a smaragd, a jasper, and a diamond, as the fond, foolish, phantastick courtier, Stella in *Martial* is said to weare? or when, like *Lollia Paulina*, ye go beset and bedeckt all over with emerauds and pearles ranged in rowes one by another, round about your tires, caules, borders, peruges of haire, boongraces, chaplets, carcanets, upon your wrists in bracelets, upon your fingers with rings? that yee glitter and shine again as yee mince along; what with all these can you make of yourselves, but idle housewives and idols of vanity?"

"Let the case be put, that this vertuous man finds a vertuous wife. O how sweet is that conjunction! the blessing is doubled to either, the relation is cherubicall, the reflection seraphicall, the consummation of their loves angelical."¹

"As King Richard bestowed himselfe diversly at his death, so must wee in life. Bohemia claimes a part in our loue, the Palatinate a part, the churches abroad, our brethren at home, a part; at home, in selling, we must be buyers; in lending, borrowers; in visiting, patients; in comforting, mourners; abroad, we must in our owne peace consider their warres, feele them panting, see them bleeding, heare them scriching, 'O husband, O wife, O my child, my child; O mother, mother, mother, my father is slaine, my brother is torne, my legge is off, my guts be out, halfe dead, halfe aliue, worse than either, because neither.' O that wee had hearts to bleede over them, and to pray for the peace of Ierusalem."—"Yes, you lawyers (to instance) must be common blessings, and not seeke your owne; you must (with *Papinian*) reiect bad causes, and ripen good; there goes but a paire of sheares between a protracting lawyer and cheating mountebanke, that sets his client backward and forward like a man at chesse, and proves a butcher to the sillie sheepe, which ran to him from the grasier."—"You landlords must be common too,—a poore man in his house is like a snayle in his shell, crush that and you kill him; say, therefore with thy selfe, my tennant is a man, not a beast; were he a beast, yet a righteous man is mercifull to his beast; a breeding bird must not haue her nest destroyed, a yong kidd must not be sod in his mother's milke; what will become of me and mine, if I destroy the nest of breeding Christians, and having chopt them to the pot, seethe old and yong in one another's blood?"²

In the epistle dedicatory of his two sermons to the Lower House of Parliament, 1624, Mr Thomas Taylor says: "Whereas the Babylonians have mightily increased of late in their hopes, numbers, and strength, not onely those forraigne frogs and locusts, the Priests and Iesuits, have in great armies invaded our countrey, but our home adversaries have greatly multiplied, and recusants risen up everie where with great hopes of raising up the ruinous wals of Ierico againe. We (fearing lest these sonnes of Zeruiah may grow too strong for us) doe trust and pray, that your wisdomes provide that these frogs may be

¹ The Incomparable Jewell, 1632.

² Harris's Sermon at St Paul's Crosse on the last of June 1622.

taken away from us and our people, and confined to their owne sea and rivers, for the heaps of them stinke in the land ; that their merchandise be vendible no more, that their base coines be no more currant amongst us ; nor such strange children (brats of Babylon) nourished any more amongst us, unlesse they will doe as the Kenites who joyned to the Iewes.

“ Looke backe, worthy gentlemen, upon the zeal and former love of your famous predecessors, who pulled downe the nests of these anti-Christian birds. Cause the uncleane birds that flutter againe about us, with some hopes to roust and nestle among us (if that only would serve their turnes), to know the prudence and circumspection of so grave, wise, and godly a senate.”

In the first sermon, entitled, “ Fly out of Romish Babel,” he says : “ Here Rome and Babylon, for the similitude and resemblance with it, so as one egge is not liker another than Rome and Babylon.”—“ For assistance we may lend Babylon no hand to uphold her, we are commanded not to seeke the prosperity of Babel all our daies, because the Lord hath devoted her to destruction, but especially those whose hands and swords God hath sanctified to this purpose ; whensoever God shall put it into their hearts, they want neither charge nor calling to reward her as she hath rewarded them ; as she hath levied forces against the princes of the earth, so must they levie forces against her ; and the cup of death and wrath, which she hath filled to them, they must fill her the double.”

The second sermon, entitled, “ The Utter Ruine of Romish Amalek,” has the following passages : “ We never want a valorous and victorious Ioshua, to lead us and fight for us against Amalek. That Ioshua was a noble generall, with whom the Lord was, and none was able to stand before him, so as he set his foot on the necks of five kings at once ; but he was but a type and shadow of our Ioshua, a mighty captaine, and an heavenly leader, that great Michael, that treadeth upon the necks of all kings and tyrants that rise up in armes against him and his people.”—“ As Israel had not only Ioshua fighting in the valley, but also Moses praying on the hill ; so wee have many Mosesses lifting up hands and prayers, which are powerfull and prevalent against Amalek.”

If it be alleged that the sermons from which we have quoted were delivered during the first part of the seventeenth century, and that the mode of English preaching was greatly improved, we shall give a few specimens of what was preached during the reign of Charles II. And we shall do this in the language of an orthodox son of the Church of England, Dr John Eachard. “ It seems pretty hard,” says the Doctor, “ at first sight, to bring into a sermon all the circles of the globe, and all the frightfull tearms of astronomy. But I’ll assure you, sir, it is to be done, because it has been ; but not by every bungler and ordinary text-divider, but by a man of great cunning and experience.” Of this the Doctor gives a specimen from a sermon on the prophecy of Malachi,

chap. iv. ver. 2 : “ ‘But unto you that fear my name, shall the sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.’ From which words, in the first place, it plainly appears, that the sun of righteousness passed through all twelve signs of zodiack. And more than that, too, all proved by very apt and familiar places of Scripture. First, then, he was in Aries ; or else what means that of the Psalmist ? ‘The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.’ And again, that in the second of the Kings, chap. iii. ver. 4 : ‘And Mesha King of Moab was a sheep-master, and rendered unto the king of Israel an hundred thousand lambs ;’ and what follows ? ‘and an hundred thousand rams, with the whool.’ Mind it ; it was the king of Israel. In like manner was he in Taurus, Psal. xxii. 12 : ‘Many bulls have compassed me ; strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.’ They were not ordinary bulls. They were compassing bulls, they were besetting bulls, they were strong Bashan bulls. What need I speak of Gemini ? Surely you cannot but remember Jacob and Esau, Gen. xxv. 24 : ‘And when her days to be delivered were fulfilled, behold there were twins in her womb.’ Or of Cancer ? when, as the Psalmist says so plainly, ‘What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest ? thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back ?’ Nothing more plain. It were as easie to show the like in all the rest of the signs.” — “O how it tickled the divider when he had got his text into those two excellent branches ; *accusatio vero, comminatio severa*. A charge full of verity ; a discharge full of severity. And I’ll warrant you that did not please a little, viz. there is in the words *duplex miraculum ; miraculum in modo ; and miraculum in nodo*. But the luckiest that I have met withal, both for wit and keeping the letter, is upon those words of St Matt. xii. 43, 44, 45 : ‘When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and finding none. Then he saith, I will return,’ &c. In which words all these strange things were found out. First, there was a captain and castle. Do ye see, sir, the same letter ? Then there was an ingress, an egress ; and a regress, or re-ingress. Then there was unroosting and unresting. Then there was number and name, manner and measure, trouble and tryall, resolution and revolution, assaults and assassination, voidness and vacuity. This was done at the same time, by the same man ; but, to confess the truth of it, ’twas a good long text, and so he had the greater advantage.” — “But for a short text, that certainly was the greatest break that ever was ; which was occasioned from those words of St Luke xxiii. 28 : ‘Weep not for me, weep for yourselves,’ or, as some read it, ‘but weep for yourselves.’ It is a plain case, sir ; here’s but eight words, and the business was so cunningly ordered, that there sprung out eight parts, — ‘Here are,’ sayes the Doctor, ‘eight words, and eight parts. 1. Weep not. 2. But weep. 3. Weep not, but weep. 4. Weep for me. 5. For yourselves. 6. For me, for yourselves. 7. Weep not for me. 8. But weep for yourselves.’” — “Neither ought he to be altogether slighted,

who, taking that of Gen. xlviii. 2 for his text, viz.: 'And one told Jacob and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee;' presently perceived and made it out to the people, that 'his text was a spiritual dial. For,' says he, 'here be in my text twelve words, which do plainly represent the twelve hours. Twelve words: And one told Jacob, and said, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee. And here is, besides, *Behold*, which is the hand of the dial, that turns and points at every word in the text. And one told Jacob, and said, behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee. For it is not said, Behold Jacob, or behold Joseph; but it is, And one told Jacob, and said, Behold, thy son Joseph cometh unto thee. That is to say, Behold and. Behold one. Behold told. Behold Jacob. Again, Behold and. Behold said. (And also :) Behold, behold, &c. Which is the reason that this word *behold* is placed in the middle of the other twelve words, indifferently pointing at each word. Now, as it needs must be one of the clock before it can be two or three; so I shall handle this word *and*, the first word in the text, before I meddle with the following. *And* one told Jacob: This word *and* is but a particle, and a small one; but small things are not to be despised; St Matt. xviii. 10: 'Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones.' For this *and* is as the tacks and loops amongst the curtains of the tabernacle. The tacks put into the loops did couple the curtains of the tent, and sew the tent together, so this particle *and* being put into the loops of the words immediately before the text, does couple the text to the foregoing verse, and sewes them close together."¹

The following specimen of orthodox and loyal preaching by divines of the Church of England, during the Long Parliament, should have been inserted before the extracts furnished by Dr Eachard. But it would be unpardonable to omit it altogether; as, besides preserving a very curious anecdote respecting Border antiquities, it contains one of the most edifying reasons for passive obedience, and one of the most pleasant apologies for persecution, that our readers probably have anywhere met with. Dr Stephens, in a sermon preached at St Mary's, Cambridge, in 1642, on Judges xxi. 25, says:—"I have heard the prophet David suspected by some as partial in his own cause, just like the northern Borderers, who conceived the eighth commandment, 'Thou shalt not steal,' to be none of God's making, but foisted in by Henry Eighth, to shackle their thievish fingers;—but I dare oppose the 13th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans against the power of men or devils, which would trample upon the necks of kings. Suppose thy king very wicked, he hath more need of thy prayers to make him better; suppose him to be a tyrant, he will give thee the fairer occasions to exercise thy virtue of patience; suppose him to be a persecutor, he'll do thee courtesie, he'll send thee to heaven by violence."—(P. 27-29.)

¹ The Grounds and Occasions of the Contempt of the Clergy, pp. 53, 67, 68, 69. Lond. 1670.

We have room for only a few specimens of the discourses of Scots Episcopalians. The first of these that we shall mention is a sermon preached by Dr Alexander Ross, Professor of Theology at Glasgow, before the Circuit Court of Justiciary, held in that city on the 14th October 1684, and afterwards printed. We have not met with the sermon, but Mr Wodrow, who possessed it, has given a very particular account of its contents, and none who has compared his history with his authorities, will call in question either his fidelity or his accuracy. In his dedication to the judges, the Doctor tells them, that "their incomparable zeal and dexterity, whereby they managed the court, was incredibly to the advantage of a decayed religion and loyalty in that corner." "His text," says Wodrow, "was Acts xxvi. 28 : 'Thou almost persuadest me to be a Christian.' But if the Professor hath preached as he hath printed, which nobody will question, I may apply Cowley's character :—

'He reads his text, and takes his leave of it.'

"I will (says the preacher) 1st, Show the different parties of our divided *Zion*. 2dly, The malignancy of the national sin of schism. 3dly, The necessity of Episcopacy for supporting the main concerns of Christianity. Lastly, The application."—"One cannot help thinking," continues Wodrow, "he might fully as well have chosen Gen. i. 1 for a text for this subject. Indeed, to these he premises a general account of Christianity, as he calls it, that he might have a hit at the disfigured faces, and hideous tones of some people ;—and them he charges with being the occasions of the nation's heavy taxes, and points them out as the authors of all the confusions, rebellions, assassinations, and daily tumults in this kingdom ; and, after a great many ill names of the declarations at Sanquhar, Rutherglen, &c., he gives a broad innuendo upon the Reformation, complaining that the nation lies under the reproach of ruined cathedrals and metropolitical sees ; and then, in his deep oratory, descants upon Bishop Sharp's monument ; and after some dry satyr upon the remaining inclinations of so many towards Presbytery, he handles the evil of the sin of schism ; and, by some threadbare arguments, a hundred times answered, the Doctor endeavours to show the usefulness of Episcopacy to remove schism, heat, and many ill things in the Church of Scotland, since her reformation by Presbyters. And for application, after he hath taken notice how unsuitable it is for an evangelical pastor to whet the sword of justice, and press severities, he comes gravely to tell the judges that they will be justified in whatever severe methods they find proper, by the malignancy of the present schism, and the inveteracy of the distemper ; and presses them to take the harshest ways with such as threaten the very extinction of Christianity, and concludes with acquainting them, the Church is like to suffer more from her present enemies than ever she did from Nero and Dioclesian. Here the native spirit of the orthodox clergy breathes

freely ; and after he hath pointed out the persecuted party and Presbyterians in the most odious colours, and when he hath wiped his mouth, and condemned himself in what follows, he plainly hounds out the judges to wholesome severities, and tells them, though they come the length of persecution, it is no more than the schismaticks deserve, being worse than Nero and Dioclesian." Wodrow adds : "After the teaching and breathing out so much cruelty and severity in so publick a manner, I wish, for their own sakes at least, the prelatick party would be a little less clamorous upon the extremities and excesses some few of the sufferers were at this time driven to by the oppression thus preached upon them."¹ Not having seen the sermon, we cannot say whether the Professor employed as vulgar abuse as his brother, Dr Canaries, who calls the persecuted Presbyterians "the very dregs and feculency of mankind, on the account both of their birth and breeding, but especially so because of their very souls and immortalities, as being such a herd of dull, and untractable, and whining, and debauched animals, as scarcely go beyond those of the hogs and goats which ever any of them was only born for to attend." And as for the severities inflicted by government on such creatures, — "the worst is to be flung over a ladder, or for one's neck to be tied to a beam, and then to have a sledge driven out under him."²

After the Revolution, the *Thirtieth of January* became the grand day for the display of Scots Episcopalian eloquence and loyalty. We have before us a great number of sermons preached "as on this day ;" but at present we can find room for extracts from only two of them ; the one a specimen of genuine rhetoric, and the other of deep and sound judgment. The text of the first of these is Exod. xx. 12 : "Honour thy father and thy mother ;" and the sermon begins thus : "My text lyes here inclosed within a sacred cabinet of orient gems, and pearles of great price, to witt, in this chapter containing the ten commandments, which are indeed so many rich and precious jewels, shining in the mid'st of darkness. Or they are like the golden candlestick of the sanctuary, Exod. xxv. 31, *his shaft*, and *his branches*, *his bowls*, and *his knops*, and *his flowers*, with all his *lamps* of pure gold, shining with their native brightness and splendour, and enlightning all that are content to be guided by their light."—"Tis the great glory, and has been the blessing of this kingdom, that God (by whom kings reign) gave us princes, who, for their royal endowments, may be reckoned amongst the best of kings and princes of this earthly globe. For how many ages have they run down the squadrons of our enemies ! and raised to their names everlasting trophies, by their admirable courage and conduct, in defending our ancestours, their liberty, their lands and heritages, against puissant and inveterate enemies ? Our princes in stormie times have been our refuge under God, and our shelter. Nor were we ever overcome by

¹ Wodrow, ii. p. 415-416.

² Discourse representing the Sufficient

Manifestation of the Will of God, pp. 187, 192, anno 1684.

humane force, while we kept *fidelitie* to our God, and *loyalty* to our *princes*. And if at any time the bright sun of monarchy amongst us suffered an eclipse, it happened always by the dreadful interposition of the misty clouds of *impiety* and *disloyaltie*."—"O thrice cursed blow that struck the head from the head of these nations! The mirrour of manhood, the nursing father of the Church, the ornament of religion, the glory of Christianity! who died a faithful martyr, and is buried in the everlasting monuments of Fame; of whom history (the world's looking-glass and time's recorder) shall make honourable mention to all generations. 'Tis but needless to speak much of him, the deprivement of whose excellencies can't better be shadowed out by the skilfullest pensil, than by covering it over with the vail of silence. For what can my words but wrong his perfections, his virtues, and excellencies which the British world and the church of Christ were deprived of, by the bloodie hands of wretched miscreants? O execrable, O unparalleled villanie, and to be remembered with continual lamentation!"—"Scotland then did weep (like *Rachel*) for her children, and would not be comforted, because they were not. Our enemies displayed their proud banners against our walled towns, and raised up their loftie and swelling rampiers against our fortified places. The great ordinance (that fatal engine invented for the destruction of mankind), in manner of a great earthquake, so terribly roared and thundred, that the earth seemed not only to tremble under men's feet, but by and by to rend in sunder, and swallow them up. The air became thick, and the skie darkened with the smoak of the great artillery. Then were the walls of our towns made saltable, and the enemy (who glistered in their bright armour) approaching, some assaulted the breaches, others, with their scaling ladders, scaled the walls. Then followed the noise of small shot, the clashing of armour, the neighing of horses, the sound of the trumpet, the beating of drums, and other warlick instruments, with the lamentable outcries and pitiful groans of dying men, which was so confused and so great, as if heaven and earth had been confounded together."¹

The other sermon is by the celebrated champion of Episcopacy, Mr Robert Calder. The text is Gen. xlix. 5-7. Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations, *or*, as the preacher renders the words, *Instruments of crueltie are their covenants. And in their self-will, they digged down a wall*; "that is, in their willfullness, they broke down the fences. Others render it from the Hebrew, *an Ox*, and so by a metaphor it will signifie *a prince with strength and power*. Others, placing the singular for the plural, make it *Oxen*, and so the meaning to be, They took away the Shechemites' cattell, xxxiv. Gen. 28. They took their sheep, their oxen, and their asses," &c.—"In the fourth place, I come to the application; and here I shall consider, 1. Who was murdered? 2. By whom? 3. By what

¹ A Sermon preached on the xxx day of January 1703-4, at Coupar of Fife, by Mr Al. Auchinleck.

means? 4. When? 5. On what pretences? 1st, Who? A *man*, a *prince*, a *Christian*, yea, and a *martyr* for the Christian religion.”—“In the second place, let us consider, by whom? The answer is, by Simeon and Levi, brethren in iniquitie, by a prevailing partie in Scotland and England, the one the Judas that betray’d him, the other the Pontius Pilat that crucified him; and to deal verie plainly, they were the Presbyterians and Independents, two fraternities pretending to a further step of reformation, and a greater distance from the antichrist, and so others have reform’d from them, till thereby religion is dwindled into air, and enthusiastick whimsies, and have reformed themselves, out of all forms, except it be a form of godliness, the power whereof they deny.”—“It is by virtue of these principles, that the gentlemen of the *Calves-head-Club* meet together upon this day to stick their knives in a calve’s head, thereby engaging themselves in an unities to extirpate monarchie out of Britain, and to mock the humiliations and devotions of the day out of the Church. These gentlemen act conform to the Covenanters’ principles, which took off the King’s head. For, as a learned penn saith, ’Tis not the meat, but the principle that makes those feasts detestable. For trulie if the people be supream and sovereign, the King was judg’d and sentenc’d by his proper judges. Yea, let me ad another consideration by way of question: Is not the calve’s-head feast as lawfull as the public thanksgivings that the Covenanters appointed for any victories they got when fighting against the King?”—“The next particular to be considered, is, When? As to the day of the month, it was this 30 of Januarie, where the second lesson appointed for morning prayer is the historie of our Saviour’s passion, which his Majestie thought Dr Juxton, his confessor, had chosen purposlie for his case, but being informed that it was the ordinarie lesson of the day, he was exceedingly comforted. As to the year, it was the fatal 1648. Then it was that all things turned upside down, that servants turned masters, and masters slaves; then it was that the spirit of the sword turn’d out the sword of the spirit; then a king was chang’d into a protector, a covenant brought in for a creed, and a liturgie was exchang’d for a directorie. Then were taverns turn’d into temples, tubbs into pulpits, mechanicks turn’d ministers, and ministers ston’d like the old prophets. Churches were made stables for horses, or folds for cattell; the house of prayer was made a den of thieves, or a synagogue for Sathan: then it was that the new gospell turn’d out the old, and extempore excluded the paternoster.—And then a notable design was set on foot for enlarging the body of Protestants, which was to make an incorporate union with the Turks.—Nay, then a days, the Jews could obtain their petition for S. Paul’s church to be a synagogue for the 500,000 lib., which they offered to the usurping and arbitrary rulers, but the new reformers found they could not spare it, from being a guard-house to keep the city of London in obedience; and had this held, there is no doubt but Moses had thrust out Christ,

and the two tables the four Evangelists.”—“Lastly, let us seriously pour out our souls before God, for our national and personal sins ; particularly the sin of rebellion, that God may not pour down the vials of his wrath on the land. Let us pray that the principles for which he suffered may be revived, and become the practice of this land. Let the memory of Charles I., as a King and a Christian, become to us as musick to the ear, and honey to the mouth ; and let the name of Cromwell and Bradshaw become as odious to British subjects, as the name of Judas and Pontius Pilat are to Christians.

“From the spirit of Core, Dathan and Abiram, Absalom and Achitophel, Balaam and Judas, good Lord deliver us.”¹

The importunity and insolence of the *British Critic* has extorted these extracts from us ; and if he shall come forward with his whole “century of Presbyterian preachers,” we shall be prepared to confront them with *two* centuries. We have some little acquaintance with the history of Episcopacy in England and Scotland, both secret and public ; and we think also that we know something of what its defenders, whether clerks or cavaliers, can produce against Presbyterians on the score of imprudence or of violence. The aggression has been on their side ; we have appeared on the defensive ; and being satisfied that this is our duty, we shall not shrink from its performance.

¹ A Sermon preach'd on the Barbarous and Bloodie Murder of the Royal Martyr, King Charles the First, 1708.

PART III.

AMONG the delinquencies of the author of the *Tales*, we consider it as none of the least, that his work is highly calculated to foster those mistaken and unfavourable notions which the people of England entertain of his countrymen during the period of which he writes. Of this we have already seen a very convincing proof in the language held by the *British Critic*. As an additional proof we may appeal to the *British Review* for January. That work is conducted on principles unspeakably more moderate and liberal than the *British Critic*; and, accordingly, the notice which it takes of the *Tales* is marked with candour, and a regard to critical justice. It begins very fairly, by giving a short narrative of the oppressions which the Covenanters endured; and it concludes with expressing a suspicion (for what person of judgment could fail to suspect?) that the work has “infused too much absurdity and ferocity into the character of the Covenanters,”—“that its features are too much on the confines of caricature,” and that it “displays too little sensibility to the crimes and cruelties of the royalists.” But the reviewer was destitute of that knowledge which could enable him to detect the errors which he suspected, or which could preserve him from adopting others of which he entertained no suspicion. The reader may take the following specimen: “Six bishops were consecrated, and sent off to Edinburgh in one coach, to graft prelacy upon the kirk; to substitute a regular liturgy for inspired effusions; to impose forms and ceremonies upon a people, who, in the height of their spiritual fervours, regarded all forms and ceremonies with the bitterest scorn, and to destroy the darling equality of Presbytery, by elevating huge monopolisers of church power and jurisdiction.”¹ Whether there were six bishops consecrated at London, or only four, we do not reckon it worth while to dispute, and whether they were sent off in one coach, or in four coaches, we shall not give ourselves the trouble to inquire; but certain we are, that all that follows in that sentence, with the exception of grafting prelacy on the kirk, is an ignorant waste of empty words, which only tends to show the reviewer’s rashness, in taking up a subject with which he had no proper acquaintance. It is long since we were satisfied that no dependence was to be placed upon the judgments, whether favourable or unfavourable, which English censors of the press may be pleased to pronounce upon any historical work relating to Scotland. And we

¹ *British Review*, No. XVIII., p. 195.

should not be at all surprised to find that every one of them had adopted, as genuine, the most foolish and extravagant of the statements in the *Tales*, with even less qualification than has been used by the conductors of the work to which we now refer.

We would be ashamed of being found to cherish a spirit of narrow and illiberal nationality, especially towards the natives of our sister kingdom ; but we confess that we have felt proud of the superior knowledge which our countrymen have displayed of the history of England, compared with the knowledge which Englishmen have of ours ; and we feel proportionally humbled when we perceive a Scotsman retailing English blunders, and dressing the most crude materials with laborious trifling, to feed English prejudices at the expense of his country's honour. It is but of late that Englishmen have come to entertain correct notions of Scotland, or of the character of its inhabitants ; and to this day their knowledge of its history, and of its parties, political and religious, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, is extremely imperfect and erroneous. Passing over such considerations as are connected with the political situation of the two countries both before and after the union of the crowns, we cannot refrain here from adverting to a few facts which serve to account for this singular phenomenon. During the infamous administration of Arran (Captain James Stuart), when the national liberties were overthrown along with Presbytery, a libellous attack on the proceedings of the Scottish nation and church was published under the name of a Royal Declaration.¹ Upon the fall of that unprincipled minister, the King disowned the Declaration, and threw the whole blame upon Archbishop Adamson, by whom it had been drawn up. But previous to this disavowal, it had, through Adamson's influence with the English bishops, been reprinted at London, with a preface more odious than itself, and inserted in the *Chronicle* then publishing by Hollinshed, from which it continued to be copied into the histories of England ; while the Scots were precluded, by the peculiarity of their circumstances, from publishing anything in their own vindication.² After James's accession to the crown of England, the pen, as well as the influence of the monarch, was employed in propagating among his new subjects, prejudices against the Presbyterian Church, and in loading the memory of its most distinguished members with every species of unfounded abuse. During the troubles excited by the imposition of the Liturgy, another calumnious declaration against the Scots Church was published by royal authority.³ The

¹ Declaration of the Kings Majesties Intention and Meaning toward the laic Actis of Parliament. Edinburgh, 1585.

² The first History of the Church of Scotland, by a Presbyterian, which came farther down than 1567, was Petrie's, published so late as 1662. The abstract of Calderwood was not printed until 1678. Those only who are intimately acquainted with the events that intervened, and with the fraud and

violence practised by the court and the prelatic faction, are capable of judging how far Presbyterians were excusable, and to what degree they were culpable, in not publishing the genuine history of their proceedings, until falsehood and misrepresentation had taken such deep root as to become inextirminable.

³ A Large Declaration concerning the late Tumults in Scotland, from their first originals:

spirited conduct of the Scottish nation, and the sympathy which was excited in England by a similarity of circumstances, prevented this attack from proving injurious to the cause of Presbytery. The Declaration was withdrawn; and Charles I. imitated the conduct of his father, by leaving his chaplain, Balcanquhal, to sustain the odium of that offensive publication. The cloud of prejudice was completely dissipated, and for several years the character of Scots Presbyterians stood high among the people of England; but no sooner was that proud and inconstant nation freed from its fears of despotism, than it began to treat the Scots, whose assistance had contributed so materially to its deliverance, with ingratitude and insult. As a glaring proof of this, it deserves to be mentioned, that the slanderous Declaration of Adamson above referred to, was at this time reprinted, and circulated with great industry, in England, not by the cavaliers, but by the sectaries, and that both in the English and Scots dialects.¹ During the reign of

together with a particular Deduction of the Seditious Practices of the Prime Leaders of the Covenanters; collected out of their owne foule Acts and Writings, &c. By the King. London, 1639, fol. p. 430.

The following extracts will show the spirit of this Declaration: "The first contrivers, and since pursuers, of their late wicked covenant (their national covenant, as renewed in 1638), or pretended holy league (a name which all good men did abhorre in them of France), though following the patterne of all other seditions, they did and doe pretend religion, yet nothing was or is lesse intended by them; but that they, having received from us full satisfaction to all their desires, expressed in any of their petitions, remonstrances, or declarations, yet their persisting in their tumultuous and rebellious courses doth demonstrate to the world, their weariness of being governait by us and our laws," &c. — "These men, who give themselves out to be the onely reformers of religion, have taken such a course to undermine and blow up the religion reformed by the scandell of rebellion and disobedience, which, so farre as in them lyeth, they have gone about to cast upon it, that if the conclave at Rome, the several colleges or congregations perpetually sitting at Rome for contriving and effecting the meanes of reducing to the Roman obedience all those kingdomes and provinces which have justly departed from them, nay, and if, with both these, all the Jesuites and others, the most specially combined and sworn enemies to our profession, were all assembled in one place, and had all their wits and devices concentrated into one conclusion and resolution, they could hardly have fallen upon such a way as these pretended reformers have fallen upon for turning all men out of the pathes of the reformed religion." — "For by their particular proceedings, truly set down in this Our Narration, it will plainly appeare, that their maxims are the same with the Jesuites; their preachers' sermons have been delivered in the very phrase and style of

Becanus, Scippius, and Eudæmon Johannes; their poor arguments, which they have in their seditious pamphlets printed or written, are taken almost *verbatim* out of Bellarmine and Suarez, as appeareth to us by Our Royal Father his Monitorie Preface to all Christian Kings and Princes," &c., pp. 2, 3. All the pulpits in England under the influence of the Court, re-echoed these charges against the Scots nation; and yet, in the following year, the very proceedings so virulently arraigned, were ratified by his Majesty as just and lawful, and the Large Declaration was condemned as a "scandalous and dishonourable treatise—full of lies and untruths." How far Charles was sincere in this matter, — what confidence could be placed in his declarations and promises, while he continued attached to his evil counsellors, — and what security the people of Scotland would have had for the enjoyment of their lately recovered rights, in the event of the King's having subjugated the Parliament of England, — it is not difficult for any one acquainted with the history of those times to determine.

¹ Baillie's Historical Vindication, Ep. Dedic. "That pestiferous carcassee," says Baillie, "which, with all possible infamy, was buried so soon as borne, and did lye quiet in its grave of shame till a full climacterick of threescore and three years, our good friends have been so wise for themselves, and kind to us, as to dig up its stinking bones, and to carry it from house to house, from shire to shire, over all England, and wherever else a printed pamphlet can goe, serving their brethren of Scotland with this curtesie according to their covenant. And least the antick face of so long buried a body should not have been looked upon by the multitude with any contentment, they did choise to be at the cost of putting it in a fine new English dresse, and setting upon its head the cape of a royall title: all to draw the eyes of the vulgar upon it, who otherwise might have passed by it with neglect and disdain. In this they

Charles II., and under the tyrannical administration of the Duke of Lauderdale, the corrupting of the public mind in England by the circulation of the most false and exaggerated accounts of Scottish affairs, was systematically pursued, and carried to an extent of which very few are now aware. Dr Hickee, Lauderdale's chaplain, was for a number of years employed in composing the most abusive libels against the Presbyterians, and all who sought to thwart the measures of his patron;¹ and though none who has any regard to his own reputation for sense or candour would now refer to his writings as authorities, yet many of his most notorious falsehoods, and grossest misrepresentations, were admitted into the general history of England, and continue to this day to pollute its pages. If we add to these the assiduous efforts of the Scotch Jacobites from the Revolution to the death of Queen Anne, adverted to in a preceding part of this review, we may be able to form some adequate idea of the causes which have produced such misconceptions in the minds of Englishmen respecting the most important transactions in the history of Scotland.

It might be thought that these mistakes would have been corrected by the histories of Scotland more lately written by some of our own countrymen. But this effect has been but partially produced. This may be attributed, in a great degree, to the general and comprehensive nature of these histories; the plan adopted by their authors confining them to an exhibition of the leading facts, and precluding them from entering into more minute inquiries and details. But a regard to truth obliges us to go farther, and to state, that some of our late historians, from prejudices felt by them on the score of politics or religion, have, instead of correcting, confirmed the erroneous impressions previously made on the public mind with relation to some of the most estimable characters and important transactions in our national annals. We shall give an example of this from Mr Laing's History. In his narrative of transactions from the Restoration to the Revolution, that able historian describes, with commendable feelings of indignation, the cruelties of an oppressive and persecuting Government. At the same time it cannot be denied, that he has been almost as liberal as Hume in applying the name of fanatics to the objects of persecution, and has exposed himself to the censure passed by the poet on his predecessor, who

——— " execrates, indeed,
The tyranny that doomed them to the fire,
But gives the glorious sufferers little praise."

Mr Laing shows himself unfavourable to the Covenanters at an

have put themselves to a peece of pains which I never knew or heard used with any other book; they do print it first in Master Adamson's owne old Scottish language, and thereafter translated it in good moderne English, setting before both the title of—A Declaration made by King James in Scotland concerning Church Govern-

ment and Presbyters." Copies of these two editions, printed in 1646, are now before us.

¹ The principal of these are "Ravillac Redivivus:"—"The Spirit of Popery speaking out of the mouths of Fanatical Protestants;" and "The spirit of Enthusiasm exercised."

earlier period. In general, we consider him as having failed to do justice to their enlightened zeal for civil liberty, and to their disinterestedness in the union which they formed with the English Parliament, and in the assistance which they afforded it, during the civil war. But the passage which we have immediately in our eye relates to the Scots preachers who went to London in 1640, along with the Commissioners appointed to conclude the treaty begun at Ripon. "A house," says he, "was appropriated in the city for their (the Scotch Commissioners) residence: the adjacent church of St Antholin's was assigned for their devotions. They were attended by Henderson and other eminent divines; and from dawn till the Sabbath was concluded, their chapel was crowded and surrounded with multitudes of all ranks, whom the novelty of the Presbyterian worship had attracted. The conflux and insatiate resort of the people who clung to the windows when excluded from the doors, to inhale the sanctified tone and provincial accents of a barbarous preacher, has been justly ascribed to the fanatical spirit that began to predominate, which rendered them apt recipients for the fumes of devotion."¹ In support of this representation, Mr Laing refers to Clarendon and Hume. Now, Clarendon does not say one word about sanctified tones, provincial accent, barbarous dialect, fanatical spirit, or fumes of devotion. All that he says in proof of the bad taste of the people who crowded to hear the Scotch preachers, is, that their discourses were very "insipid and flat,"²—properties, one would be apt to conclude, not much calculated to foster a "fanatical spirit," or to raise "the fumes of devotion." Mr Laing must, therefore, have borrowed his representation solely from Mr Hume; and, indeed, he has merely altered the language used by that historian. Having described the crowd without doors as "catching at least some distant murmur or broken phrases of the holy rhetoric," Hume adds: "All the eloquence of Parliament, now well refined from pedantry, animated with the spirit of liberty, and employed in the most important interests, was not attended to with such insatiable avidity, as were these lectures, delivered with ridiculous cant, and a provincial accent, full of barbarism and ignorance."³ Now we must say, that all this is ridiculous cant, and full of ignorance; and we are surprised that a person of Mr Laing's good sense, and who well knew upon what slender grounds many of Mr Hume's descriptions rest, should have adopted such a statement. It was ridiculous cant in Mr Hume to talk in the style of applause of the refined eloquence of Parliament, and of their being "animated with the spirit of liberty," for which he felt no admiration; and we can view this in no other light than as a flourish to enable him to aim a more effectual stroke at the Scots preachers, and the exercises of religion; just as he exalted the character of Queen Mary, of whom he confesses he had no good opinion, that he might lower the reputation of the

¹ Laing's History of Scotland, vol. i. p. 184.

² Clarendon, Hist. of the Rebellion, vol. i. p. 151. Lond. 1702, fol.

³ Hume's History, chap. 54.

reformers of his native country. What ground had he for saying that the sermons of the Scots preachers were "delivered with ridiculous cant?" Or what good reason had he for asserting that they spoke with an "accent full of barbarism and ignorance?" We are persuaded he had none. Both he and Mr Laing seem to have taken it for granted, that the farther back we go in the history of Britain, the difference between the language of the English and Scots was the wider. The very reverse of this we believe to be the truth. They seem to have taken it for granted, that, in 1640, well educated natives of Scotland could not deliver a discourse before Englishmen of the same class without exposing themselves to ridicule by the barbarity of their provincial dialect and accent. It might have occurred to them, that, if this had been the case, Lord Clarendon would scarcely have omitted to particularise it on the present occasion. It might have occurred to them, that they must, in the course of their reading, have met with this allegation by some contemporary writer, if there had been any foundation laid for it. For our part, we can declare, that we do not recollect a single instance of such a reflection being brought against the Scottish divines (and they were exposed to many reflections, both grave and satirical) during the time that they were in London attending upon the Westminster Assembly.

With respect to the matter and composition of their sermons, which are of greater consequence, we must say, in opposition to Lord Clarendon, that they were not "insipid and flat," and in opposition to Mr Hume and Mr Laing, that they were neither debased with "pedantry," nor "fanatical and barbarous." We have read, not one, but a number of sermons preached by Henderson, Gillespie, and Baillie,¹ and we are sure we do not go too far when we say, that they may bear a comparison with any sermon at that time delivered in London, and that they might have been heard (and indeed were heard) by the most refined members of the Parliament of England without the slightest feeling of disgust or ridicule. With respect to Henderson in particular, three of his sermons, preached before that Parliament, are now on our table, and they show that he possessed not merely good sense and learning, but also a rich imagination and a refined taste. That our readers may not be left to depend upon our opinion, we shall give the character of this divine as drawn by a member of the English Church, who cannot be suspected of partiality. "Alexander Henderson, the chief of the Scottish clergy in this reign," says Grainger, "was learned, eloquent, and polite; and perfectly well versed in the knowledge of mankind. He was at the helm of affairs in the General Assemblies in Scotland; and was sent into England in the double capacity of a divine and plenipotentiary. He knew how to rouse the people to war, or negotiate a peace. Whenever he preached, it was to a crowded audience; and when he pleaded or argued, he was regarded with mute attention."² Such was the man

¹ Mr Robert Blair was the only other Scots minister in London at the time referred to. We do not speak of him, because we have not met with any of his sermons; but we have no reason to think that they were inferior to those of his colleagues.

² Biographical History of England, vol. i. p. 416.

whom our modern historians modestly call "a barbarous preacher;" and under such direction were those ecclesiastical courts, whose proceedings they represent as characterised by bigotry and fanaticism!

We have pointed out this instance of inaccuracy and unfairness in the writings of Mr Laing, because many, who are on their guard against the palpable prejudices of Hume, may be in danger of being imposed upon by his representations. With the political sentiments which he avows in his history, we have the happiness in general to agree; and on many points we have been much indebted to the accuracy of his researches. But no coincidence in political opinion, nor in any set of opinions, and no obligations which we may feel to the labours of an individual, will induce us to overlook any act of injustice done to truth, or any attempt to detract from the hard-earned praise so justly due to men who, in critical times, stood forth as the defenders of religion and liberty. It is but justice to say, that we know none of our historians who has been more exact in examining his authorities than Mr Laing, and we have never in one instance found him chargeable with anything like intentional unfaithfulness in reporting the result of his inquiries. But we beg leave to make two remarks here; and we make them not so much in relation to the case under consideration, as with a view to historical reading at large. In the *first* place, there is a wide difference between the consulting of books and manuscripts in order to acquire what may be called the *facts* of a period, and a consulting of these in order to ascertain the *character* of the age, including the opinions, talents, acquirements, and moral qualities of the principal persons who figured in it. This last requires a compass of reading, a minuteness of investigation, a slowness in progress, a patient and long-continued attention to the subject, which few are inclined to bestow, and which is scarcely to be expected from those who write general history, or the history of a particular nation during a long period of years. Even the most accurate historians will commit very great mistakes in this respect, if they are not extremely cautious and diffident in giving their judgment on points which they have not carefully investigated. In the *second* place, we must remark, that a spirit of indifference to religion incapacitates a person in a great measure for doing justice to our history during the 16th and 17th centuries. Religion had such influence on all the revolutions of that period, and its disputes were so much involved in all the great political questions which were then agitated, that it is impossible to give a just view of the latter, without an extensive and accurate acquaintance with the former. But those who are inclined to be sceptical in religion, or who view all its forms as equally uncertain or false, or unworthy of rational reception, naturally feel a disgust at those inquiries which it is absolutely necessary for them to make, and, entering upon the investigation with reluctance, they are apt to conduct it with superficiality. To the same cause we must trace the disposition of such writers to form a low opinion of the talents of religious persons, or

to impute their actions to unworthy motives. Unacquainted with the influence which religion exerts over the minds and conduct of men, they are ready on all occasions to charge them with weakness, with hypocrisy, or with fanaticism.

To some, perhaps, these observations may appear irrelevant to the subject of this review ; but the truth is, that we would not have deemed the *Tales* worthy of the notice which we have bestowed on them, had we not been convinced that the ordinary sources of public information are deeply polluted. We judge it of consequence to point out this along with some of its principal causes. A radical mistake, both as to measures and characters, runs through the most interesting part of our history, and until this is noticed and corrected, partial misrepresentations may be exposed, but the evil will remain uncured. Nor can the instances to which we have just referred be viewed as unconnected with our present subject. The preachers who, in the *Tales*, are held up to ridicule and odium as fools or fanatics, received their education under Henderson and his colleagues ; their principles agreed with those of their predecessors ; their talents and acquirements did not radically differ ; and the aspersions thrown on the characters of the one and the other may be traced to the same causes, political or religious.

The author of the *Tales* has given a most unfair view of the common people of Scotland in point of intelligence. This we deem very unworthy of a Scotsman, who should be proud of the superior sense and information of his countrymen, and be always ready to do justice to them. He could scarcely fail being aware, that the common people among the Presbyterians were in general better informed than the rest of their countrymen of the same rank. But what a poor idea must we form of their intelligence, if we judge of it from the ridiculous and incoherent harangues put into the mouth of such persons as Widow Headrigg, even on points of religion, with which they had the best opportunity of being acquainted ! Such unfair representations will, however, have no influence, except on those who are either completely ignorant of the subject, or predisposed to embrace them. They are flatly contradicted by the credible testimonies of both friends and foes to the Covenanters. "At the king's return," says Kirkton, "every parochie had a minister, every village a school, every family a Bible ; yea, in most of the countrey all the children of age could read the Scriptures, and were provided of Bibles, either by the parents or their ministers." As a proof of the thirst for knowledge excited in the minds of the people, that historian mentions that he knew of sixty aged persons who went to school that they might acquire the art of reading. Bishop Burnet confirms the statements of Kirkton respecting the assiduity with which the Presbyterian ministers performed the public and private duties of their office, and the proficiency which the people made under their instructions. He was one of the six Episcopalian divines selected

¹ History of the Church of Scotland, MS.

to itinerate in the west country, and to persuade the people, by their sermons and private conversations, to agree to the scheme of accommodation between Episcopacy and Presbytery, which Leighton was so eager to carry into effect. They were the most learned and able men of that persuasion, and usually called *the Bishops' Evangelists*. "The Episcopal clergy who were yet in the country," says Burnet, in his account of that progress, "could not argue much for anything; and would not at all argue in favour of a proposition that they hated. The people of the country came generally to hear us, though not in great crowds. We were indeed amazed to see a poor commonalty so capable to argue upon points of government, or on the bounds to be set to the power of princes in matters of religion: upon all these topics they had texts of Scripture at hand, and were ready with their answers to anything that was said to them. This measure of knowledge was spread even among *the meanest of them, their cottagers, and their servants*. They were, indeed, vain of their knowledge, much conceited of themselves, and were full of a most entangled scrupulosity; so that they found or made difficulties in everything that could be laid before them."¹ The reader will observe that this extract refers to the very topics on which the Covenanters are made to talk so foolishly and ridiculously in the Tales. It is evident, from his own account, that the bishop had found himself not a little "entangled" and hard pressed in the disputes which he maintained with these cottagers; and, therefore, we can excuse him for complaining of the scrupulosity with which they adhered to their opinions, and the vanity with which they triumphed in the replies which they made to his arguments. He tells us, however, that he had afterwards an opportunity of revenging himself on one of their preachers, to whose studied speech against Episcopacy, he, being "then full of those matters," made a most triumphant and silencing reply.²

The author of the Tales may perhaps think that he is so far borne out in his representations of the Presbyterian commonalty, by what Bishop Burnet has said of their prayers. "They," says he, speaking of the ministers, "had brought the people to such a degree of knowledge, that cottagers and servants would have prayed *extempore*. I have often heard them at it; and though *there was a large mixture of odd stuff*, yet I have been astonished to hear how copious and ready they were in it."³ But a small degree of attention will convince any one that this affords only the shadow of an apology. The bishop acknowledges, in the very next sentence, "they had a comprehension of matters of religion, greater than I have seen among people of that sort anywhere." By the mixture which he finds fault with, he therefore most probably meant such unfit expressions and phrases as sensible people may be supposed to use in extemporaneous speaking. And we

¹ History of His Own Times, vol. i. p. 431. Edin. 1753. 12mo.

² Ibid., p. 435.

³ Ibid., p. 228.

know that the same charge is to this day brought by the advocates for a prescribed liturgy against the prayers still used in the Presbyterian Churches. Besides, the things which the bishop characterises as odd, are in a great measure matters of taste, which is various and changeable. What one man thinks odd, appears to another very natural, and what was familiar in one age, becomes strange in the next ; nay, so very capricious is this principle, that we often find things which had been exploded as oddities and barbarisms, revived and brought into fashion again. We shall endeavour to make this as plain as we can, by an example. Poetry has of late adopted a new style among us, and has exhibited beauties which were not formerly recognised, or held in admiration, during what was usually called our Augustan age. Let us suppose that some of the critics of the old school should rise from the dead—Addison, Pope, and Johnson, for instance ; and let the admired productions of some of our Lake and Border poets be submitted to their judgment, we are strongly inclined to suspect that their verdict would contain a clause of the same kind with that which the bishop pronounced on the extempore prayers of the Presbyterian commonalty, and that they would say, “There is a large mixture of *odd stuff* in them ; yet we have been astonished to see how copious and ready they are in it.” As for the bishop himself, he is a very entertaining memoir-writer, and a very instructive one too ; but it must be confessed by his greatest admirers, that there is a great mixture of *odd stuff* in his *OWN TIMES* ; and often have we been astonished at the copious and ready manner in which he pours it forth. Even the Liturgy of the Church of England is not exempted from this charge—it, too, contains “odd stuff ;” and we do not recollect to have heard any expressions or phrases or any repetitions of them, used in extemporaneous prayer, which are half so objectionable and offensive to us as the irreverent ejaculations and vain repetitions which occur in the Litany alone, “to be sung or said after Morning Prayer, upon Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and at other times when it shall be commanded by the Ordinary.”

Bishop Burnet is very particular in his account of the Presbyterian preachers ; and while he allows that they were pious men, and highly respected by the gentry as well as the common people, he testifies a disposition to find as many faults in them as he can. With all the faults he has ascribed to them, we do not hesitate in preferring them far, not only to his brethren in Scotland (whose inferiority, with a very few exceptions, he does not attempt to conceal) ; but even to the Episcopalian clergy of England, including both the “pyeballed,” and also those who undertook to “reform the way of preaching,” and who recommended themselves so much to that excellent judge of true taste and good sermons, Charles II. We have a great respect for the bishop, on account of his private character, and his public services in the cause of civil and religious liberty both before and after the Revolution ; but regard to truth, and to the character of men who suffered far more for

this cause than he did, obliges us to mention a few facts not generally adverted to, which go to qualify our confidence in his *dicta* on this subject. The first relates to his sentiments on religion. The Presbyterian ministers were all decided Calvinists, whereas the bishop was an Armenian,—a circumstance which at that time could scarcely fail to give a tinge to his opinion respecting their sermons. *Secondly*, we ought to consider his employment during the time that he was in Scotland. He was not only of Episcopalian sentiments, but, during a number of years, he acted as a zealous champion for Episcopacy, and for the laws by which it was established and supported in this country after the Restoration. In this warfare he did not confine himself to the pulpit, the academical chair, and private disputations, but he appeared as a declared antagonist to the Presbyterians from the press.¹ It is proper also to state, that, in these publications, he did not treat them with the greatest mildness, and was in his turn handled by his opponents without much ceremony. He has not mentioned these facts in his history; and he was extremely anxious to suppress the dedication of one of his polemical works, in which he panegyrised Lauderdale, whose administration he had warmly supported, but whom he afterwards deserted.² Although, therefore, he had altered his views, and repented of his former conduct, in many things, before he composed the *History of His Own Times*, yet there is good reason for doubting if the bishop was the impartial historian which many have supposed him to be, so far as Scots Presbyterians are concerned; and it is natural to think that the unfavourable impressions which he had early received against them, and which were confirmed by the controversial warfare which he had managed, continued to exert an influence over his mind. This will account, in a great degree, for what he says of the haughtiness of the Presbyterian ministers,—their servility, censoriousness, indiscretion, and passion,—the indifferent size of their capacity, and the confined nature of their literary acquirements. Some of these charges are not very consistent, and the accusation of servility or fawning comes with rather a bad grace from one who repeatedly fell into this sin. More than one of them

¹ In 1669 he published "A modest and free Conference betwixt a Conformist and a Non-Conformist, about the present distempers of Scotland." This was answered, in 1671, by "The True Non-Conformist;" to which he replied in "A Vindication of the Authority, Constitution, and Laws of the Church and State of Scotland. Glasgow, 1673."

² In his Dedication of the *Vindication to the Duke of Lauderdale*, he says, "To whom is a vindication of the authority and laws of this kingdom so due as to your Grace, to whom his Majesty hath, by a royal delegation, committed the administration of affairs among us; and under whose wise and happy conduct we have enjoyed so long a tract of uninterrupted tranquillity?—I pretend not,

by prefixing so great a name to these Conferences, to be secure from censure by your Patrocinny, since these enemies of all order and authority, with whom I deal, will rather be provoked to lash me with the more severity." The first Conference is intended to refute the opinion, "that subjects under a lawful sovereign, when oppressed in their established religion, may, by arms, defend themselves, and resist the magistrates," and to prove that magistrates do not derive their power from the people. This shows that the bishop's political sentiments afterwards underwent a great change, and that his biographers do not state the matter fairly, when they assert that, before this period, he was averse to all severities in matters of religion, and condemned the harsh measures taken against the Presbyterians.

possessed as large a size of capacity, and as great a compass of learning, as the bishop; and they would have distinguished themselves, had it not been for the unfavourable circumstances in which they were placed. We have no hesitation in mentioning Mr John Brown of Wamphray as one of these.

"The preachers," says the bishop, "went all in one tract, of raising observations on points of doctrine out of their text, and proving these by reasons, and then of applying those and showing the use," &c. Now, in the *first* place, it is highly to the credit of the Presbyterian preachers in point of sound sense, that none of them did at any time suffer themselves to be infected with the conceited, pedantic, absurd, and disgusting practice, so general and so long continued among English divines, of interlarding their sermons with phrases and quotations from Latin and Greek authors. *Secondly*, the bishop is forced to allow that their method was excellently calculated to gain, at least, one of the great ends of preaching; for he says that "the people grew to follow a sermon quite through every branch of it." But, *thirdly*, it is not true that the method described by him was invariably followed by the Presbyterian preachers. We allow that it was common. But a mode of preaching less encumbered with divisions of the subject, more varied, more free and excursive, and more fitted to awaken the attention and enliven the mind, had been introduced among them at an earlier period, and was followed by many of the ministers. This plan was adopted, not only by Archbishop Leighton, but also by many of the Protesters, who were the most zealous Presbyterians.¹ If we have room for it, we shall afterwards give a specimen of a third method, which was simple and chaste, and united in a great degree the advantages of the two preceding plans. The author of the Tales has given a specimen of what may be reckoned a *fourth* plan, in the sermon that he has put into the mouth of Ephraim Macbriar, of which the idea has been borrowed from a sermon preached by Cameron, that we have read. These facts show that neither the bishop nor our author was well informed on this subject, though both of them have written on it with sufficient confidence. The bishop farther tells us, that some of the Presbyterian preachers mistook for "the work of the Spirit of God" what their people said to

¹ Mr Baillie gives the following description of the plan in his account of the settlement of Mr Andrew Gray, by the interest of the Protesters at Glasgow:—"He has the new guise of preaching, which Mr Hugh Binning and Mr Robert Leighton began, containing [perhaps *disdaining*] the ordinary way of expounding and dividing a text, of raising doctrines and uses; but runs out on a discourse on some common head, in a high, romancing, and unscriptural style, tickling the ear for the present, and moving the affections in some, but leaving, as he confesses, little or nought to the memory and understanding."—Baillie's Letters, ii. 385. This, it must be recollected, is the representation of one who

was prejudiced against the party, in which this method of sermonising was most prevalent. Mr Baillie was warmly attached to the Public Resolutions. Specimens of this plan may be seen in the discourses of Leighton and Binning. It may contribute to the correction of mistakes as to the character of those times, to remark, that Archbishop Leighton differed very widely from Burnet, Nairn, and Charteris, on the doctrines of revealed religion. On these he coincided in sentiment with the Presbyterian ministers, several of whom, although they condemned his compliance with Episcopacy, yet, having been educated under him, or admiring his talents and piety, imitated his style of preaching.

them "under fits of melancholy ; or vapours, or obstructions." It might be so, and it might also be true that the bishop mistook the vapours for "abstraction of mind, and the other great heights of Christian religion," and that, by recommending these feelings as the essence of true religion, he fed this disease of weak minds too much. For it should be known, that the bishop was, at least at one period of his life, an admirer of ultra-puritanism, and found great fault with the Presbyterians for their want of spirituality. "The true heights of spirituality," says he, "were as little preached as the living much in abstraction, silence, and solitude ; the being often in the still contemplations of God and Christ, the becoming dead to all things else, spending dayes and nights in secret fastings and prayers,—how seldom were these things spoken of? Who of you despise the world? give away your goods to the poor? who bear injuries without resentments and revenge? Who are willing to be set at nought?" &c.¹ We do not, however, suppose that Bishop Burnet was ever a thorough convert to the opinions of the mystics ; he spoke, in a great measure, the language of Charteris, and one or two others with whom he at that time associated ; and he was too much a man of the world, and too fond of company and of talking, ever to become an ascetic or quietist.

Whatever were the talents of the Presbyterian preachers, there can be no doubt of their success in accomplishing a most salutary and desirable reformation on the manners of the people. This had become very conspicuous in the latter part of the Interregnum, after the confusions produced by the civil war had subsided. The efficacy of Presbytery, in producing sobriety and decorum of behaviour, was universally acknowledged. "Nobody," says Kirkton, "complained more of our church government than our taverners, whose ordinary lamentation was, 'Their trade was broke, people were become so sober.'" After the Restoration, when licentiousness of every kind was not only tolerated but encouraged, when the priest as well as the prince had become profane, the Presbyterian spirit with which the nation was still animated, was the only principle which checked and counteracted the progress of the alarming evil. It was the salt which preserved the mass from total and incurable corruption. We are told, that, in the primitive days of Christianity, those who were persecuted, were scattered abroad, and went everywhere preaching the word. The laws against non-conformity, and their rigid execution, contributed indirectly to introduce the blessings of religious

¹ Modest and Free Conference, pp. 19, 23. "Sir," says the bishop's opponent in reply, "you are so much upon your *heights*, that you see nothing about you. Pray, descend a little, and consider that your own ministers are as great strangers to these fine expressions of yours, and you and they to the things signified, to say no worse, as ours are." He adds, that this ideal and abstracted scheme of devotion was taken up by many as an excuse for their patronising

a religious establishment which was founded in violence, and productive of profaneness, and as a prudent pretext for their consulting their own ease in complying with the arbitrary injunctions of authority. "O the rare temper of this new device, that both inwardly elevates to the highest spiritual abstractions, and outwardly smooths to a most easy temporising compliance!"—The True Non-Conformist, pp. 52, 61, 62.

knowledge and good order into some parts of Scotland, which had hitherto resisted the influence of all the ordinary means of civilisation, and continued in a state of ignorance and barbarism. The good effects of field-preaching on the inhabitants of the Borders have been mentioned by different writers ;¹ but there is reason to believe that they were more extensive than is commonly supposed. There is an anecdote illustrative of this which deserves to be generally known. The "Thieves of Annandale" had become a proverbial expression, from the fact of the inhabitants of that district being generally addicted to theft. In 1678, after the Highland host was brought in upon the west country, the Duke of Hamilton having gone to London to represent the grievances of the country, was followed by the Marquess of Atholl and the Earl of Perth. In travelling through Annandale to Carlisle with a small retinue, the two statesmen were benighted, and unable to find their way. Two country women, who happened to meet with them in this situation, conducted them to a cottage, the inhabitants of which gave them the best entertainment in their power. The noblemen having expressed a fear that their horses would be stolen during the night, as the house in which they were lodged was unlocked, the cottagers quieted their apprehensions by assuring them, that "there was now no thieving in their country since the field-preachings came among them;" adding many other particulars respecting the reformation which had been produced upon the inhabitants.² We shall subjoin another anecdote, very characteristic of the two parties into which the nation was divided, and descriptive of the marks by which the judges were accustomed to distinguish the objects of prosecution. During the heat of the contentions, the parish of Wiston, in Clydesdale, having become vacant, a very unpopular candidate was presented. On the day of his admission, the people rose and chased the curate and his company from the church. A lady in the parish, who was suspected of having instigated the tumult, was summoned before the Privy Council. When she appeared at the bar, and her libel had been read over, the chancellor asked her if the charges were true, to which she replied, "The devil one word is true in them." The lords stared on one another; and after a short pause, the chancellor courteously told her, that her cause was adjourned to a future day. She was never more troubled. "Such virtue," says Kirkton, "there was in a short curse fullie to satisfie such governours; and many thought it good policy to demonstrate themselves to be honest profane people, that they might vindicate themselves of the dangerous suspicion of being Presbyterians."³

The author of the Tales accuses the Covenanters of "an abhorrent condemnation of all elegant studies."—(Vol. ii. 315.) In order to make room for statements which we consider as of greater intrinsic importance, we must exclude at present the materials which we had collected on

¹ Leyden's *Scenes of Infancy*; and Scott's *Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border*, Introd.

² Kirkton's *MS. History*.

³ *Ib.*

this subject. We positively deny the charge, and challenge the proof. Though certainly not bound to prove a negative, we have not the slightest doubt that we could show, to the satisfaction of our readers, that the accusation is utterly unfounded; that it is of the same kind with the charge so long reiterated against the Roundheads of England, until it was silenced by a more accurate knowledge of their private history, and particularly by the publication of the *Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson*; that though the circumstances in which they were placed did not admit of their cultivating them, yet the Covenanters did not condemn, far less express their abhorrence of elegant studies; that, among those held in great reputation among them, there were persons of an elegant turn of mind and good taste; and that, while the author, with the view of exalting the character of the Cavaliers, and putting into the mouth of Burley that condemnation of elegant pursuits which he imputes to the whole party, has fabricated a copy of verses for Bothwell, he has, at the same time, from inexcusable ignorance or the most culpable partiality, overlooked or suppressed the fact, that there was, at that very time, in the camp of the Covenanters, a man, who, besides his other accomplishments, was a poet superior to any on the opposite side whom he could produce or now can name. These affirmations we engage to make good, provided they are called in question, and as soon as we shall have a regular opportunity of redeeming our pledge.

If we believe the author of the *Tales*, the Covenanters were devoid of enlightened regard to civil liberty, and actuated solely by bigoted attachment to Presbytery, and a desire to have it restored in opposition to Prelacy and Erastianism. It is unnecessary to refer to particular passages; this is the idea conveyed to the mind of the reader by the whole representation. Now, in the *first* place, this statement, granting it to be correct, would not warrant a summary condemnation of the struggles of the Covenanters, and still less the ridicule with which it has been attempted to cover them. The resistance lately made by the Spanish nation to French usurpation, and its persevering exertions to throw off the yoke imposed upon it, met with general applause in this country. Did these proceed from liberal views of civil liberty? or was the object of them of more intrinsic importance than that for which the Scottish Covenanters contended? Who will say so that knows anything of the subject? At the Restoration, the Presbyterians of Scotland were in possession of rights, political and ecclesiastical, which were secured to them in the most solemn manner. These were violated and overthrown by a prince, who had sworn in his coronation oath to maintain them. Their established religion was taken from them; laws were enacted and penalties inflicted, to enforce conformity to an establishment odious to the nation; and they were fined, imprisoned, and proscribed for refusing this, and for receiving divine ordinances from the only class of persons whom they could acknowledge as their lawful ministers. After enduring such oppressions, and being driven at last

to the extremity of taking up arms in the defence of their lives, are they to be stigmatised and derided, because, in their manifestoes, they demanded the restoration of their covenanted privileges and laws, instead of pleading for the rights of men, or for their "chartered rights as free-men," in the elegant and approved style which a modern novelist is pleased to prescribe?

In the *second* place, we directly oppose ourselves to the statement, and maintain, that the Covenanters were the genuine and enlightened friends of civil liberty, and the only persons who made a consistent and firm stand in its defence. It may justly be matter of surprise that this should be doubted, or that we should be obliged to produce evidence in its support. Who can doubt it, that is acquainted with those Covenants from which they obtained their name, for which they have been accused of cherishing a superstitious veneration, and which they justly venerated? In the National Covenant, as renewed in 1638, did they not declare, that the innovations and evils against which they had supplicated and complained, did "sensibly tend to the subversion and ruin of our *liberties, laws, and estates?*" and did they not "promise and swear to stand to the defence of our dread sovereign, the king's majesty, his person and authority, in defence of *the liberties and laws of the kingdom?*" In the Solemn League and Covenant, made in 1643, did they not declare, that they had before their eyes not only "the glory of God, the advancement of the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and the honour and happiness of the king's majesty and his posterity, but also *the true public liberty, safety, and peace of the kingdoms?*" did they not swear to endeavour, with their estates and lives, mutually to preserve "*the rights and privileges of the Parliaments, and the liberties of the kingdoms,* and to preserve and defend the king's majesty's person and authority, in the preservation and defence of the true religion and *liberties of the kingdoms?*" and did they not describe the object of their league to be the defence and promotion of "this *common* cause of religion, *liberty,* and peace of the kingdoms?" In the renovation of this Covenant, in 1648, did they not declare, "Some amongst ourselves have laboured to put into the hands of our king an *arbitrary* and *unlimited* power, destructive to *the privileges of the Parliaments, and liberties of the subject;*"—"and many of us have been accessory of late to those means and ways whereby the freedom and privileges of Parliaments have been encroached upon, and the subjects oppressed in their consciences, persons, and estates?" and did they not promise to "vindicate and maintain *the liberties of the subjects,* in all these things which concern their consciences, persons, and estates?"—We appeal to the struggle which they maintained, in conjunction with the Parliament of England, during the civil war, and to the blood and treasure which they expended in that contest. Was not the preservation of the liberties of the three kingdoms against arbitrary power, and the settlement of these on a sure basis, one principal object of this, and con-

stantly avowed by them in all their manifestoes, declarations, and apologies? And did they not protest against the invasions made on these by the English army, in trying and executing the king, putting down the Parliament, and altering the whole frame of the constitution and government?—We appeal to their conduct when they espoused the interest of Charles II., in opposition to the Commonwealth of England. Did they admit him to the exercise of the royal authority in Scotland, upon his consenting to the Presbyterian establishment, in the way of overlooking and sacrificing their own civil rights, or those of the sister kingdoms? Did they not, on the contrary, expressly take him bound, at his coronation, to preserve the latter, as well as the former, inviolate? We appeal to their conduct at the Restoration. Were they not the only party who endeavoured to prevent the overthrow of the civil as well as the ecclesiastical constitution, and who testified against the laws which stretched the royal prerogative beyond all due bounds, and encroached upon the liberty of the subject?—We appeal to the books written by Covenanters, and held in the greatest esteem among them. To *Lex, Rex*, which had the honour to be consigned to the flames among the first acts of the Government after the Restoration, which, as its title expresses, was intended to prove that “the law is superior to the prince,” and which established, with much learning and ingenuity, the leading principles of political liberty, in opposition to the patrons of absolute power and passive obedience. To the *Apologetical Relation*, in which the *civil supremacy* with which Charles II. was invested is shown to be no less incompatible with the liberties of the nation, than his *ecclesiastical supremacy* was with the liberties of the Church;¹ in which the proceedings of the Parliaments of England and Scotland, in

¹ In answer to the objection, that “the Parliament having annexed such power to the crown, it is lawful for private subjects to acknowledge and swear to maintain it,” the author makes the following reply: “In poynt of law it will be a very great question, whether Parliaments, who are but trustees intrusted by the people, whose commissioners they are, and virtually, if not expressly, bound to maintaine their rights and privileges, may betray their trust, and give away the just and ancient privileges of Parliament, and therewith the just and ancient liberties of the people. It will be a great question, if they, at their own hand, may alter the fundamentall lawes of the land, without the consent of those whose commissioners they are. And it will be a greater question in law, if this Parliament might have sold or given away the privileges of Parliament, and liberties of the people, seeing so much in poynt of law may be objected against its being a free Parliament, if the want of freedome of election in shires and burghs—if prelimitation—if the election of such as were not capable, by the fundamentall constitution of Parliaments, and practice of the kingdome,—and other informalities of that kinde, may have any place

or weight in the annulling of Parliaments. But, 2d, in poynt of conscience, it is clear that Parliaments may not now give away, and according to their pleasure dispoine of the rights and privileges of Parliament; for in the third article of the League and Covenant, all the people of the land, and Parliaments among the rest, are sworne to maintaine, in their severall places and capacities, and so Parliaments, in their parliamentary capacity, the rights and privileges of Parliament. 3d, Though the Parliament, notwithstanding of the bonde of the Covenant, should denude themselves of their privileges, yet, now seeing every particular member of the kingdome is sworne, according to his place and station, to maintaine the rights and privileges of Parliament, they may not assent unto such a deed of the Parliament, and by their oath and subscription approve of such a wrong; for that is the least that private persons, who desire to minde and make conscience of the oath of God, can do at such a time, viz. to refuse to give an expresse, clear, and positive assent unto such a wrong done to the rights and privileges of Parliament contrary to the Covenant.”—*Apologetical Relation*, by Brown of Wamphray, pp. 257, 258. Printed anno 1665.

opposing the arbitrary designs of Charles I., and the validity of the rescinded acts, are defended ; and in which the court of *High Commission* is condemned as contrary to “the rights and privileges of parliaments” and “the liberties of the kingdom,” and as flowing from “an arbitrary power assumed by the prince over them, contrary to the fundamental laws of the land, in setting up what judicatories he pleaseth without consent of Parliament, without whose special warrant and authority the meanest fixed court cannot be erected.”¹ The same principles are avowed and vindicated in *Naphtali*;² in the defence of that work, entitled *Jus Populi Vindicatum*;³ and in the *Apology for the Persecuted Ministers and Professors of the Presbyterian Reformed Religion*.⁴ These were the books which were in the hands of the Covenanters, and from which they derived that knowledge which astonished Bishop Burnet ; and none but a person who is ignorant of their contents, could ingenuously oppose “Whiggery” to the “chartered rights of freemen,” as the author of the *Tales* has done. If, in their reasoning on this subject, they made frequent appeals to the Bible, this is no more than our author has made Morton do, upon the very evident principle, that arguments drawn from this source are most level to the minds of the common people, and best adapted to satisfy conscience. It is no more than was common at that time among writers on government, and was afterwards practised by Sydney, Locke, and Hoadly. But they by no means confined themselves to such arguments ; they freely appealed to the law of nature and nations, to the constitution and practice of free monarchies and republics in ancient and modern times, and to the authority of the best writers on politics and jurisprudence.

It is true that the Covenanters, in their apologies, grievances, and demands, gave a prominent and distinguished place to their ecclesiastical rights and privileges. And must they be blamed for doing this ? They did so, because, much as they valued their civil rights, they prized their religious rights still more highly. They did so, because they considered it as more daring to invade, and more criminal to surrender, the privileges of the “kingdom of heaven,” than the privileges of an earthly kingdom. They did so, because it was more immediately on the ground of religion, and of their adherence to their ecclesiastical liberties, that they were then suffering. And, in fine, they did so because they were convinced that it was principally through these that their civil rights were struck at and endangered. The author of the *Tales* holds up the Covenanters to ridicule as narrow-minded bigots and fanatics, because they preached, and testified and contended, with such zeal and keenness, against Prelacy, Erastianism, and the Indulgence. But the ridicule must appear extremely futile, as soon as the subject is properly understood. We know that there are not a few who treat with

¹ Apologetical Relation, by Brown of Wamphray, sect. x., xi., xix. Printed 1665.

² Written by Mr James Stirling, minister of Paisley, and first printed in 1667.

³ Written by Sir James Stuart of Goodtrees (Lord Advocate after the Revolution), and printed in 1669.

⁴ Printed in the year 1677.

indifference all questions relative to the external order and government of the church, and disparage all contentings about these as savouring of bigotry, and tending to draw away the minds of men from due attention to the essential and more momentous parts of religion. The words of the poet are always in the mouths of such persons :

“ For modes of government let fools contest,
Whate’er is best administered is best.”

Such maxims, whether they proceed from poets or pious men, and whether they be applied to the state or the church, are to be received with great caution, and are often urged with the most insidious design. If believed and acted upon according to their native import, they would lead us to sacrifice and throw away privileges of the most valuable kind, which have been acquired or transmitted at the greatest expense. Who will say that the government of Turkey or Spain is equally good as that of Great Britain, and that there is the same reason to expect national happiness under the former as under the latter ? If this be the case as to political government, much more must it hold with reference to that which is of an ecclesiastical nature. No external order, indeed, will infallibly secure the advancement of real and genuine religion ; but we are warranted, from the reason of the thing, and from experience, to expect that the diffusion of knowledge, the preservation and transmission of truth, and the regular and profitable dispensation of all religious ordinances, will be more effectually provided for by one form of ecclesiastical polity than by others, — not to refer here to the determinations of Scripture, which have not left the government of the church to be constructed according to the capricious opinions of men, or to rest on the same general grounds with civil polity.

But this is not the view of the subject that we have chiefly in our eye at present. What we assert is (and we make the assertion without the slightest fear of refutation), that, in opposing Prelacy, Erastianism, and the Indulgence, the Covenanters were standing up for the civil rights and political liberty of their country. Prelacy in Scotland was always combined and leagued with arbitrary power. The prelates, to use an expression of one of themselves (Archbishop Gladstones), were the *king’s creatures* ; they derived their power entirely from him ; they were supported by him in opposition to the inclinations of the nation ; and they uniformly showed themselves disposed and ready to gratify his will, and to sacrifice to it the liberties and best interests of the people. What is Erastianism ? Is it not the principle which ascribes the whole power of modelling and regulating the government of the church to civil rulers ? Now, in Scotland this was declared to belong, not to the whole Legislature, but to the Crown, as one of its inherent and peculiar rights. The whole weight of this extensive branch of authority, and of the influence arising from it, was thus thrown into the regal scale. By Erastianism, Prelacy was introduced, and by means of it the absolute subserviency of the hierarchy to the

Crown was infallibly secured. The Indulgence was merely an excrement of Erastianism, proceeding from the ecclesiastical supremacy, and exerted in suspending the existing laws. If it was in some instances employed in suspending the execution of laws which were bad and oppressive, it was capable of being employed for setting aside all those which were good. And in the succeeding reign it *was* employed, in conjunction with the civil supremacy, as an engine for overthrowing the constitution in church and state, and for introducing Popery and despotism.

But are these merely our inferences from the subject? No; they were the views entertained by our ancestors, and by which they were animated in their opposition to these invasions of their ecclesiastical constitution. We shall produce positive evidence of this. And first with regard to Prelacy:—"These prelates, who make an absolute surrender of religion, conscience, and all sacred concerns, for the gratifying, and to the arbitrament of these powers, whose creatures they have often atheistically acknowledged themselves to be, do with the same and greater profusion subject both laws, liberties, and the fortunes of others, to the lust of the same powers, which they may so easily perfect unto their own establishment and advancement. And this indeed is, and hath always been, that great aggravation of our latter Prelacy, rendering the same worse and more intolerable than the Romish hierarchy, which, being wholly dependent upon the Pope, another and distinct head, and not upon the civil power, whose interests are often-times not only distinct, but directly opposite, it hath neither that access nor influence to abuse princes; whereas our prelates, deriving all their power and being from the king's supremacy, by endeavouring, for their own better establishment, to render him uncontrollably absolute over and in all things, they being otherwise mean and abject persons, having the least, and almost no share nor interest in the commonwealth; and, by reason of their ill right and worse conscience in what they do possess, being always cruelly jealous, have, by sad experience, ever inclined the Government unto tyranny."¹ After having confirmed this by a reference to a variety of late acts and proceedings, this writer concludes:—"To see a free nation, by the perfidy and insolent domineering of a few upstart prelates, and the violence of their wicked and slavish favourites, reduced to the condition of a most insupportable and unnatural conquest, both was, is, and ever will be, a most just cause and provocation, to all ingenuous spirits and true patriots, to undertake the asserting of their own liberty, upon the greatest hazard."² The same views came to be entertained by persons who had been attached to Episcopacy, as appears from the following extract of a letter from an independent individual, written at the time of the rising at Bothwell: "For me you know how much and how often I have contended for Episcopacy. But now I have considered their partial behaviour in the

¹ Naphtali, pp. 174, 175, edit. 1680.

² Ibid., p. 178.

matter of Danby and the lords in the Tower, those arch enemies of our king and government. I see them both there and here so knit to the bias of the court, that they will rather sell their souls, and the whole interests of the kingdom, than not swing to that side right or wrong. I see them generally to be men altogether set upon their own profit and advancement, and that, when once they can make their court well, they little mind religion or the care of souls. I see they take no effectual course for curbing of profanity, and that, if a man will but stand for their grandeur and revenues, they easily dispense with his being otherwise what he will. I see that almost any scandalous fellow that will own them, and hath but an M before his name, may have a kirk ; too many whereof I know, and more here than with you. I have considered Bishop Sharp as their head and last introducer, whose reward hath been terrible in the justice of God, whatever the actors have been. And I have considered Bishop Paterson as the tail, whose reward is, no doubt, waiting him also, if he mend not his manners. I have not forgot their cruel, arrogant, and bloodthirsty stopping of his majesty's gracious bounty, and keeping up of his remission after the business of Pentland, which, with their torturing and hanging of the poor people, after quarters given them in the fields by General Dalziel, as it was a singular reward to him for his good services done them, so may it, to all honest hearts, be as palpable as it is an odd example of their faith and manners. I see the very offscourings of the earth employed by them, as their trustees and heroes, for propagating of their conformity ; and some of them, though base all over, and despicable above all expression, yet owned and caressed by them as brave fellows, and chief promoters of their principles and interest ; yea, so little choice make they on this head, whether as to profanity, popery, atheism, or what else you can think on, that for ought that appears, as many devils out of hell would be welcome to them to prop their Dagon of Prelacy, and be a scourge to the fanatics."¹ In this same manner we find such of the Presbyterians as opposed the Indulgence reasoning. They condemned it as an assumption of ecclesiastical power, as an encroachment upon the liberties of the Church, and a scheme to bring its ministers to a state of base and servile vassalage to the court. But they also condemned the acts of Privy Council, which granted the Indulgence as proceeding upon a dispensing power on the part of the Crown. "The sole warrant of the king's letter," says Brown of Wamphray, "cannot in law warrant and empower them to contravene express lawes and acts of Parliament, and not only to disobey the injunctions of Parliament, but in plain terms to counteract and counter-work the established and ratified lawes, and so to render them null and of no effect. The very embracing of the Indulgence was, upon the matter, a recognition of this power in the king to do, in and by his Privy Council, in church matters, what he pleased, even though contrary to antecedent

¹ Wodrow, *il.*, Appendix, pp. 18, 19.

acts of Parliament.”¹ On such grounds many worthy ministers refused to take the benefit of the Indulgence, although the liberty which it granted was nothing more than what they were entitled to, and exposed themselves to great hardships and persecutions, rather than recognise a usurped supremacy, and countenance an illegal exercise of royal authority,—conduct which merits the highest applause, instead of the censure which it has incurred.

These extracts, which might easily be multiplied, place the conduct of the Covenanters in a very different point of view from that in which it is presented in many of our histories. They throw light upon the genuine import of the language which we find them so frequently using, and dissipate the ridicule which has been ignorantly attached to it. In testifying against Episcopacy and Erastianism, and in contending for Presbytery, the Covenants, and the Reformation established in pursuance of them, they were in fact appearing in behalf of the national rights and liberties, in opposition to tyrannical imposition, and an arbitrary system of government, and not merely in support of certain principles of religious belief and ecclesiastical polity. Additional proofs of their attachment to the principles of rational liberty are at hand in great abundance. In refusing the illegal bonds and oaths that were imposed on them, they pleaded the laws of the land, and the rights of freemen.² In their personal appearances at the bar—in the testimonies which they composed in prison—and in the speeches which they delivered on the scaffold—we find them advancing the same plea.³ In all the declarations published by the Cameronians, from the time that they separated from the rest of the Presbyterians till the Revolution, whatever we may find to condemn, we cannot but admire the ardent and invariable attachment which is expressed to political freedom.⁴

As a specimen of the ardent and enthusiastic love of civil liberty, combined with zeal for the Protestant religion, which inflamed the breasts of the Presbyterians, we cannot refrain from making the following quotation from a letter of a minister, exiled in Holland;—it was written by him in the end of 1679, upon his being informed of the flattering reception which the Duke of York met with on his arrival in Scotland. “I cannot hide it from you, that I would have been less troubled, if I had heard that he had marched down to Scotland with an army, made up of his English, French, and Irish Papists, and all the men of that kidney, soul, and complexion, which are associate to burn, slay, and destroy that poor church and nation, because of their declared detestation at his abominations and idolatry, to the erection whereof he resolves to sacrifice the lives of all the lovers of our Lord Jesus Christ in the three kingdoms, and of the patriots of their country, who witness that they cannot outlive the departing of the glory, nor give up the

¹ History of the Indulgence, 30, 31. Printed in 1678.

² Wodrow, vol. i., Appendix, Nos. 82, 83.

³ Naphtali, 308, 311. Samson's Riddle, 27, 29, 40. Testimony by Mr John Dick, 4, 12.

⁴ Informatory Vindication, *passim*.

interest of Christ, together with the liberty of the nation, to the lust of so publickly declared an enemy to both ; than to have heard, that by this very deed, we have declared our abominable baseness, in the sight of God, angels, and men. Alas ! whither have we not caused our shame to go ? Alas ! where is the Lord God of Elijah ? Oh ! where is the spirit of our noble ancestors, zealous for the Lord God of Hosts ? —I shall not trouble you with the stories of all that horror, hatred, and shaking of head, wherewith this account is entertained abroad, amongst all that are so much Christians, as to give the just preference to religion, or so much men, as to love the liberty of their nation,—and would rather die in the quarrel, ere they saw and suffered themselves to be robbed of that only treasure of religion, and together with that, to outlive the loss of their liberty—and so only to live—to breathe, as beasts, under the yoke of antichristian bondage ; and at length breathe out their miserable lives, under the bitterness, anguish, and agony arising from the reproachings of their own conscience, that they had been so much beasts as to entail slavery on their posterity—and so go to the grave, as the most miserable captives, under the curse of the children not yet born. Nor shall I entertain you with the account of that just discountenance and disrespect, wherewith he was entertained in the United Provinces, where he might have presumed and promised himself a great and predominant respect ; in so much as, all the time he was there, the people were so incensed at him, as an enemy to pure religion and true liberty, that his name was not so much as put in the publick courants ; lest, if it had, both pens and tongues had taken a just liberty and freedom to regrade his having so much countenance or regard.

“And, by the way, what may the United Provinces think of us, when their courants shall be filled with the stories of this solemn and sumptuous reception, appointed for welcoming such a declared enemy to religion and liberty ; as if he were, for his affection to both, the very darling and delight of the nation ? Sure, they will bless themselves, that they are not yet degenerate so far as we are ; who, in this, seem to have forgotten we have souls, and are so much beasts, as, with the faces of men, we can bow our neck to the yoke of bondage, and glory in being so base. But it concerns us much more to think, and seriously to weigh, what England will judge of the solemnity of this reception ; when, from the one end of that nation to the other, their publick gazettes shall set before their eyes, our shame, and the matter of their grief and sorrow. What shall these true patriots, who then withstood the court-contrivances, while under so many disadvantages, now think of us ? What shall these nobles, who with so much greatness and grandure of spirit, did not only own the Protestant religion (while they saw the design discovered of destroying it), by displaying openly a banner for truth, in face of Parliament ; but were pleased, in high, heroick freedom which will make them famous to posterity, to concern themselves,

even in the preservation thereof, in Scotland, France, and Ireland, as well as in England? I need not recite any part of that memorable discourse, wherein the noble speaker¹ carried rather as an ambassador of Jesus Christ, than a statesman cast in the mould of carnal court politicians of this declining time.—I say, what judgment shall they give of us?"²

The account which the author has given of the insurrection of the Covenanters is not correct. He represents them as having "broken out into actual rebellion" previous to their being attacked by Claverhouse at Drumclog, and as having "declared their intention to remain together in arms, for furthering the covenanted work of reformation." (Vol. ii. p. 300.) No resolution of that nature, however, had been formed by them, nor is anything of the kind expressed in their declaration published at Rutherglen.³ For a considerable time previous to this, a number of those who attended field preachings, had been in the practice of carrying arms, to defend themselves and their brethren against straggling parties of soldiers who attacked the conventicles. In consequence of the violent measures lately adopted, the number of these had increased; and, instead of assembling in small parties as they had formerly done, they drew together in larger bodies, with a view to greater safety. But still their object was merely to defend their religious assemblies, and to prevent those who attended them from being maltreated or massacred. It was after the recounter which they had with the corps under Claverhouse, that they resolved to act in an offensive manner; and the dread of the severe revenge which the Government would take, had no small influence in determining them to come to this resolution.⁴ The present rising was, therefore, similar in its origin to that of Pentland; and Government never discovered any trace of correspondence with England, or of previous concert and intended insurrection, on the part of the Covenanters.

We do not mention this circumstance because we judge it essential to the vindication of those who, on the present occasion, took arms to defend themselves against intolerable oppression, and to assert their liberties. Their defence rests on more substantial grounds. It rests on the same grounds as that of the resistance made by the Protestants in Germany, the Netherlands, and France, who were publicly aided by Elizabeth, James, and Charles I. If the Covenanters were chargeable with rebellion, it is impossible to vindicate these princes and their parliaments from the charge of fostering rebellion. We appeal not only to their practice, but also to their public declarations, in which they avowed the right of subjects to defend themselves against the oppression and tyranny of their native sovereigns. We appeal to the language held by James, whose ideas of royal prerogative were sufficiently

¹ The Earl of Shaftesbury, in his Speech to the House of Lords, March 24, 1679.—Wodrow's Hist., vol. ii. p. 22; Appendix, p. 3.

² Mr Ward's *Enayriavias*, or Earnest Contendings for the Faith, pp. 332-334, 336.

³ Wodrow, ii. 44; Informatory Vindication, p. 171.

⁴ Wodrow, ii. 47.

high. "My reason of calling you together," says his Majesty in a letter to Dr Abbot, "was to give your judgment, how far a Christian and a Protestant king may concur to assist his neighbours to shake off their obedience to their own sovereigns, upon the account of oppression, tyranny, or what else you like to name it. In the late queen's time, this kingdom was very free in assisting the Hollanders both with arms and advice, and none of your coat ever told me that any scrupled about it in her reign. Upon my coming to England, you may know, it came from some of yourselves to raise scruples about this matter; yet I never took any notice of these scruples, till the affairs of Spain and Holland forced me to it. I called my clergy together to satisfy, not so much me, as the world about us, of the justness of my owning the Hollanders at this time. This I needed not to have done, and you have forced me to say, I wish I had not."¹ In his speech to the Parliament that year, he had these words: "A king ceases to be a king, and degenerates into a tyrant, as soon as he leaves off to govern by law; in which the king's conscience may speak to him as the poor woman to Philip of Macedon,—either govern by law, or cease to be a king."² And again, in his speech, anno 1609, "A king governing in a settled kingdome, ceaseth to be a king, and degenerateth into a tyrant, so soon as he leaveth to rule by his lawes, much more when he beginneth to invade his subjects persones, rights, and liberties, to set up an arbitrary power, impose unlawfull taxes, raise forces, and make warre upon his subjects, whom he should protect and rule in peace; to pillage, plunder, waste, and spoile his kingdom; imprison, murder, and destroy his people in a hostile manner, to captivat them to his pleasure." We can appeal to divines and dignitaries of the Church of England, who have sanctioned the principles of resistance on which our ancestors acted—to Jewel, Hooker, Bilson, Bedel, Burnet, Hoadly, and King. But this is unnecessary, as the whole Convocation, the Church of England representative, in Elizabeth's reign, publicly acknowledged it "glorious to assist subjects in their resistance to their sovereigns, and their endeavours to rid themselves of their tyranny and oppressions."³ And in 1628, when Charles I. resolved to assist the French Protestants, both Houses of Parliament petitioned his Majesty to appoint a fast; and in the office of devotion composed for the occasion, the nation was directed to pray for all those "who, here or elsewhere, were fighting God's BATTLES, and defending his altars." In fine, their conduct was vindicated at the Revolution, when the Parliament of Scotland, "in prosecution of the *claim of right*," rescinded all the forfeitures and fines passed against those who had been in arms at Pentland and Bothwell, and pronounced them void and null *from the beginning*. After mentioning a vast number of names, the act proceeds, "Likeas, their Majesties, and three Estates, rehabilitate, reintegrate, and restore so many of the said persons as are living, and *the memory of them that*

¹ The Bishop of Sarum's Speech on the Impeachment of Dr Sacheverell.

² Ibid.

³ Hoadly's Measures of Submission to the Civil Magistrate, p. 149.

*are deceased, their heirs, successors, and posterity, to their goods, fame, and worldly honour."*¹

But though the unconcerted nature of the insurrection at Bothwell is not necessary to vindicate its lawfulness, yet it is of great consequence, as tending to account for the divisions which arose among the insurgents, and led to the complete failure of their enterprise. Had they taken up arms from previous concert, a plan would have been formed; proper leaders would have been chosen; and the grounds of their undertaking would have been agreed on and digested. As it was, the first measures were taken on the spur of the occasion; those who had been called to take the lead in the sudden affair at Drumclog, and who were probably elated with the unexpected victory that they had gained, considered themselves as entitled to retain their command, although some of them do not appear to have been the best qualified for it; and they proceeded to state the grounds of the quarrel according to their own views, without waiting the advice of their friends, who soon joined them from other parts of the country. Upon the arrival of the latter, a difference of opinion arose, which, in spite of all attempts to accommodate it, produced hot altercations, and issued in the most fatal disunion. The majority of the officers who commanded at Drumclog insisted, that the authority of the king should not be acknowledged, and that the acceptance of the Indulgence should be condemned in the manifesto which it had been resolved to publish. Both of these propositions were resisted by those who joined them, and were admitted to their council before the battle of Bothwell.

The account which the author of the *Tales* has given of this dissension is very far from being correct. After describing the officers of the covenanting army assembled in council in the darkest colours of his pencil, he proceeds to say,—

"With them were mingled their preachers, men who had spurned at the indulgence offered by Government, and preferred assembling their flocks in the wilderness, to worshipping in temples built by human hands, if their doing the latter could be construed to admit any right, on the part of their rulers, to interfere with the supremacy of the Kirk. The other class of counsellors were such gentlemen of small fortune, and substantial farmers, as a sense of intolerable oppression had induced to take arms, and join the insurgents. These also had their clergymen with them, who, *having many of them taken advantage of the Indulgence*, were prepared to resist the measures of the more violent, who proposed a declaration in which they should give testimony against the warrants and instructions for indulgence, as sinful and unlawful acts."

¹ Acts, Parl. I., William and Mary, July 4, 1690. Among the reasons for passing this act, the first is as follows: "Because it is evident by His Majesty's declaration, while Prince of Orange, for the kingdom of Scotland, that the oppressions and violent persecutions which these persons suffered, as well after as before their forfeiture, are there set down amongst the principal motives that induced His Majesty to undertake for the relief of this kingdom." To the objection, that "to restore persons who were forfeited for rising in arms upon necessary

standing laws, and clear and evident probations, were to lay down the worst of preparations to encourage rebellions for the future," it is honestly and bluntly replied, "Can any man allege that the rescinding of forfeitures for these former insurrections can be a bad preparative to encourage insurrections for the future; but, at the same time, he must think that the late great Revolution may likewise be drawn into a far more mischievous consequence, a thought which certainly all honest men must abhor."—*Wodrow*, ii., App. No. 159.

Now, the truth, we are persuaded, will turn out to be, that there was not one minister who had "taken advantage of the Indulgence" in the camp of the Covenanters, from the battle of Drumclog down to that of Bothwell Bridge. In the royal proclamation against the rebels, fourteen ministers are mentioned, and Wilson gives the names of eighteen, as present.¹ Is the author able to point out one indulged minister among all these? We are convinced he is not. Yet, as if the matter had been quite unquestionable, he goes on to describe the contest between the indulged and non-indulged ministers with great minuteness, and in a manner which, we doubt not, he thought, and still thinks, infinitely humorous. "Macbriar, Kettledrummy, and other teachers of the wanderers, being at the very springtide of polemical discussion with Peter Poundtext, the indulged pastor of Milnwood's parish, who, it seems, had e'en girded himself with a broadsword." The author could not be wrong; for "it was the din of this conflict, maintained chiefly between Poundtext and Kettledrummy, which saluted Morton's ears upon approaching the cottage;"—and "both the divines were well gifted with words and lungs, and each fierce, ardent, and intolerant, in defence of his own doctrine, prompt in the recollection of texts wherewith they battered each other without mercy, and the noise of the debate betwixt them fell little short of that which might have attended an actual bodily conflict." This is fine; but there is something still more finished behind,—a description which proves our author to be a most accurate observer of nature, and which does not yield to the best comparisons in Homer. Burley, who, with all his fierceness, had a great deal more sense and moderation than the preachers, separated the combatants. "But although Kettledrummy and Poundtext were thus for the time silenced, they continued to eye each other like two dogs, who, having been separated by the authority of their masters while fighting, have retreated, each beneath the chair of his owner, still watching each other's motions, and indicating, by occasional growls, by the erected bristles of the back and ears, and by the red glance of the eye, that their discord is unappeased, and that they only wait the first opportunity afforded by any general movement or commotion in the company, to fly once more at each other's throats." We "opine" that the time spent by the author in marking the attitudes, and looks, and growls, and bristles of his two dogs, and in committing them to memory and paper, might have been better employed in examining more exactly his historical authorities, printed and manuscript; unless some of our readers should be of opinion, that he would have been still better employed if, instead of composing *Tales*, he had occupied his time in writing a *cunomachia* to supply the loss of the *batrachomachia* of the Grecian bard.

We object seriously to this part of the author's representation, as

¹ Wodrow, ii., App., No. 30. Wilson's Relation of the Battle of Bothwell Bridge, 13, 15, edit. Glasgow, 1797.

conveying a false idea of the state of matters, as if the indulged ministers had actually joined in this enterprise. We have no doubt that many of them, if not the whole, wished it success, and that they might have taken part in it, provided it had been conducted to their mind. Some of them sent from Edinburgh the draught of a declaration of which they approved. It was conveyed by Mr Dunlop, afterwards Principal of the University of Glasgow, but not then a preacher, who was refused admission to the council of war; and none of his constituents ever made their appearance in the camp.¹ How then, it may be asked, did the Indulgence become the subject of dispute? We shall explain this in a few words. The question agitated was not, whether the Indulgence was lawful, but whether the acceptance of it should be expressly condemned in the proclamation to be made by those who were in arms. This was opposed as improper and inexpedient, because it would hinder many from joining them who were cordial friends to Presbytery, and it was proposed that the determination of this point should be reserved to a free General Assembly.² At the head of this opposition was Mr Welsh, who, instead of being an indulged minister, had been a zealous field-preacher, and intercommuned for many years.³ It was natural for those of his opinion to endeavour, in the course of reasoning on the subject, to moderate the severe censures which some of their brethren passed on the conduct of the indulged ministers, and to suggest such circumstances as tended to extenuate their compliance with it, from which the high party took occasion to accuse them of approving of the Indulgence, and in their narratives of the controversy have designed them the Erastian party. Such is the language employed in Wilson's Relation, and in the manuscript written by Russel, one of the persons engaged in the assassination of the archbishop, by whose representations the author of the Tales has, we perceive, been chiefly guided. Both Russel and Wilson are also anxious to represent the ministers, King and Kid, as going along with the high party; but this does not agree with several circumstances mentioned in their own narratives, and it is flatly contradicted by the solemn declarations of these two ministers, from which it appears that they expressly avowed the king's authority, and that, though they disapproved of the Indulgence, they had recommended pacific measures.⁴

How, then, does the case stand? Of eighteen ministers who were in the camp, the high proposals were supported by two only, Cargill and Douglas; for Cameron, who afterwards gave his name to the party, was not then in the country. And they were opposed by sixteen. To speak the sentiments of the *two*, the author of the Tales has introduced *three* preachers, Macbriar, Kettledrummle, and Mucklewrath; and to express those of the *sixteen*, he has brought forward—*one*, the Reverend Peter

¹ Wodrow, ii. 59.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 55, 57.

³ Howie, while he condemns the part which Welsh acted at Bothwell, allows that

he never approved of the Indulgence.—Preface to Collection of Sermons, p. 5.

⁴ See the authorities adduced in a preceding part of this Review, pp. 71, 72.

Poundtext, the indulged pastor of Milnwood's parish! Such is the equal and impartial representation of our author! And in this manner has he thrown a dark shade over the proceedings of the Covenanters, and aggravated the charge of violence and folly which he brings against them, by imputing to the greater part what was in reality confined to a very few of their number.

Truth requires us to state farther, that the violent measures of disowning the royal authority, and excluding from the army all who had accepted of the Indulgence, appear to have originated with, and were chiefly urged, not by the preachers, but by certain private gentlemen in the camp. This appears from the accounts of both parties. Even Cargill and Douglas were pushed on to extreme courses, both on this and on subsequent occasions, which there is reason to think they would not have followed if they had been left to their own unbiassed judgment. We formerly signified that we considered Robert Hamilton as the chief person who urged these extremities. His rank as a gentleman (he was the brother of Sir William Hamilton of Preston) had procured his being called to the command of the small body of armed men who defeated Claverhouse at Drumclog. The success which attended that encounter, and the courage which he displayed in it, gave him great influence among those who had fought under him, and, without any election, he retained the place of general.¹ He was destitute of military experience; and, although honest and zealous in the cause, his views were contracted, and his temper uncomplying and overbearing. We find him and some of his fellow-officers uniformly opposing all the moderate measures which were proposed.

We now proceed to notice the charges brought against the Covenanters on the head of sanguinary principles and practices. The statements which we have made will enable our readers to form a judgment of these. Though we should allow them to be accurately stated, and free from exaggeration, still they are applicable only to a small part of the Covenanters. The assassination of Archbishop Sharp affords one of the most common topics of declamation. But the author of the *Tales* has himself allowed, that "the greater part of the Presbyterians disowned the deed, as a crime highly culpable, although they admitted that the archbishop's punishment had by no means exceeded his deserts." (Vol. iii. p. 161.) We must beware of thinking that all those who, when interrogated by military men or judges, refused to pronounce the bishop's death murder, justified or approved of his assassination. Such illegal and arbitrary questions were resisted by them as an infringement of their liberties, inconsistent with the principles of justice, and obliging them judicially to disclose their private sentiments, and to pronounce sentence on the conduct of others.² Even Morton refused to answer the question

¹ Mr Laing has strangely conceived that Hamilton was "a preacher," and, proceeding upon this misconception, he talks of the "ghostly commanders" of the covenanting party.—*History*, vol. ii. p. 98.

² See an account of a curious conversation which Fraser of Brae had with Charles II.—*Wodrow*, ii. 288.

when it was first put to him by Sergeant Bothwell ; and in his conversation with Burley on this subject, he says,—“But it is not mine to judge you. I have not forgotten that the way was opened to the former liberation of Scotland, by an action of violence which no man can justify,—the slaughter of Cumming by the hand of Robert Bruce ; and, therefore, condemning this action, as I do and must, I am not unwilling to suppose that you have motives vindicating it in your eye, though not to mine, or to those of sober reason.” (Vol. iii. p. 170.) The circumstance of the murderers of the archbishop having joined the insurgents, has been urged as reflecting discredit on the cause. But it is a curious fact, that, down to the battle of Bothwell, it was not generally known that they were in the camp ; and Mr King, one of the ministers present, was ignorant that Burley and Rathillet were accessory to that crime.¹ This shows how much we should be on our guard against substituting presumptions and probabilities for proof in historical matters.

Morton expresses his fears of a departure from the ordinary laws of war, by refusing to give quarter to the enemy. There was some ground for this ; and we shall candidly state the facts from a letter of Hamilton, the person mainly implicated in the charge. “As for that accusation they bring against me,” says he, “of killing that poor man (as they call him) at Drumclog :—I being called to command that day, gave out the word that no quarter should be given ; and returning from pursuing Claverhouse, one or two of these fellows were standing in the midst of a company of our friends, and some were debating for quarters, others against it. None could blame me to decide the controversy, and I bless the Lord for it to this day. There were five more that without my knowledge got quarters, who were brought to me after we were a mile from the place, as having got quarters, which I reckoned among the first steppings aside.”² Judging from this account, Hamilton alone was responsible for this step. He takes the whole blame, or rather, as he viewed it, the whole praise to himself. It does not appear that he consulted with a single individual before giving the word ; his men testified an aversion to act upon it ; and in spite of his command and his example, the lives of prisoners were preserved. It should also be noticed, that Claverhouse is said to have issued the same orders before the battle commenced.³

After the defeat at Bothwell, those called *Cameronians* or *Society People*, were completely separated from the rest of the Presbyterians, both indulged and non-indulged, in religious communion, and in political managements. We shall advert briefly to such of their proceedings as have been deemed most unjustifiable. In the “Sanquhar Declaration,” published June 22, 1680, they, “as the representatives of the true Presbyterian kirk and covenanted nation of Scotland,” did “disown

¹ Wodrow, vol. ii. pp. 43, 86.

² Howie's Faithful Contendings, p. 201.

³ Wilson's Relation, p. 8.

Charles Stewart as having any right, title to, or interest in the said crown of Scotland," which he had forfeited "by his perjury and usurpation in church matters and tyranny in matters civil;" and they did "declare war" against him as a "tyrant and usurper," and against all the abettors of his tyranny.¹ About the same time a paper was found on one of them, usually called the "Queensferry Paper," which was published by Government, and occasioned a great outcry against the whole party. It contained, among other articles, a resolution against monarchical government, as "aptest to degenerate into tyranny;" but it was not subscribed, and was never owned by the Society.² The "Lanark Declaration," published January 12, 1682, was intended to state more at large the grounds of that of Sanquhar. This contains a striking description of the oppressions of the Government, and a forcible appeal to the public on the necessity which the sufferers were laid under to adopt the measure which they had taken.³

But the most singular paper, and that which made the greatest noise, was published by them in October 1684, under the name of "The Apogetick Declaration and Admonitory Vindication anent Intelligencers and Informers." After mentioning their renunciation of the authority of Charles, and their declaration of war against him and his accomplices, it runs in the following terms: "That therein our mind may be understood, and for preventing farther mistakes anent our purposes, we do hereby jointly and unanimously testifie and declare, that, as we utterly detest and abhor that hellish principle of killing all who differ in judgment or persuasion from us, it having no bottom upon the Word of God or right reason; so we look upon it as a duty binding upon us to publish openly unto the world, that, for as much as we are firmly and really purposed not to injure or offend any whomsoever, but to pursue the ends of our covenants, in standing to the defence of our glorious work of reformation, and of our own lives; yet (we say), We do hereby declare unto all, that whosoever stretch forth their hands against us, while we are maintaining the cause and interest of Christ against his enemies, in defence of our covenanted religion, by shedding our blood actuallie, either by authoritative commanding, such as bloody councillors (bloodie, we say, intimating clearlie by this, and the other adjective epithets, an open distinction betwixt the cruel and blood-thirstie, and the more sober and moderate), especially that, so called, justiciary, general of forces, adjutants, captains, lieutenants, and all in civil and military powers, who make it their work to embrue their hands in our blood; or by obeying such commands, such as bloodie militia men, malicious troopers, soldiers, and dragoons; likeways such gentlemen and commons, who, through wickedness and ill-will, ride and run with the foresaid persons to lay search for us; or who deliver

¹ Wodrow, vol. ii., Appendix, No. 47.

² Ibid., vol. ii., Appendix, No. 46.

³ Informatory Vindication, p. 176.

up any of us into their hands to the spilling of our blood ; by enticing morally, or stirring up enemies to the taking away of our lives ; such as designedly and purposely advise, counsell, and incourage them to proceed against us to our utmost extirpation, by informing against us wickedly, and wittingly, such as viperous and malicious bishops and curats, and all such sort of intelligencers, who lay out themselves to the effusion of our blood, together with all such as, in obedience to the enemies their commands, at the sight of us raise the *hue and cry* after us ; yea, and against all such, as compearing before the adversaries their courts upon their demand, delate us, and any who befriend us, to their and our extream hazard and suffering : We say, all and every one of such shall be reputed by us, enemies to God and the covenanted work of the Reformation, and punished as such according to our power and the degree of their offence, chiefly, if they shall continue, after the publication of this our declaration, obstinately and habitually, with malice, to proceed against us any of the foresaid ways.”—“ We are sorry at our very hearts that any of you should chuse such courses, either with bloody Doeg to shed our blood, or with the flattering Ziphites to inform persecutors where we are to be found. So we say again, we desire you to take warning of the hazard that ye incur by following such courses ; for the sinless necessity of self-preservation, accompanied with holy zeal for Christ’s reigning in our land, and suppressing of profanity, will move us not to let you pass unpunished. Call to your remembrance,—All that is in peril is not lost, and all that is delayed is not forgiven. Therefore, expect to be dealt with as ye deal with us, so far as our power can reach ; not because we are actuated by a sinful spirit of revenge for private and personal injuries, but mainly, because, by our fall, reformation suffers damage,” &c.¹

It is impossible to read these extracts without strong emotions of a mingled kind. The first feeling that must rise in every ingenuous breast, is indignation at the Government, which, by its tyrannical and cruel conduct, had driven a sober and religious people to such extremities. We cannot but condemn the step taken by the sufferers, as calculated, notwithstanding all their qualifications, and in spite of all the precautions they might use, to open a door to lawless bloodshed, and to give encouragement to assassination. At the same time, it is impossible to condemn them with great severity, when we reflect that they were cast out of the protection of law, driven out of the pale of society, and hunted like wild beasts in the woods and on the mountains to which they had fled for shelter. It is impossible not to recognise the honesty of their intentions, to perceive the reluctance with which they took this delicate step, and to be convinced that they had no desire to defile their hands with the blood even of their persecutors, but aimed principally at impressing their minds with a wholesome terror. This end was in some measure gained : informers were terrified, and the

¹ Informatory Vindication, pp. 186-188, 159-160.

persecution slackened for some time after the publication.¹ The only instances in which it is alleged, so far as we recollect, that it led to murder, were those of two soldiers at Swine-Abbey, and of the curate of Carsphairn. The last of these was publicly disowned and condemned by the Society People.²

Finding that several expressions in their declarations were misrepresented, and that others were expressed in a dubious or exceptionable form, the general meeting of the Society People published their "Informatory Vindication." In this document, although there are positions advanced which are not strictly consistent, nor are defensible upon the common principles of Presbyterians, yet a spirit of candour and moderation is displayed. "If in anything," say the authors of it, "we have, in the manner of managing affairs in reference to the public cause, through ignorance or imprudence, jointly miscarried, having good designs, and the thing not attended with obstinacy, our weakness and insufficiency, in the abounding confusions of these preceding times (our faithful guides and men of understanding by death and otherwise being removed), should be compassionately looked upon, and tenderly handled." They state that they were not to be understood as claiming, in the Sanquhar and Lanark Declarations, the character of formal representatives of the nation; and that, in disowning Charles II., they did not proceed judicially and authoritatively, but merely declared their own private judgment, refusing to own him as standing in a magistral relation to them. Their declaration of martial war they explained as directed solely against the tyrant, and those under his authority, who bore arms against them; and as to such as did "any way strengthen, side with, or acknowledge the said tyrant, or any other, in the like tyranny and usurpation, civil or ecclesiastical," they declared that they would oppose them, not with arms, but by their "profession, practice, and testimony." They add, "We positively disown, as horrid murder, the killing of any, because of a different persuasion or opinion from us."³ About the same period, they abolished the *oath of secrecy* which they had for some time used in their societies.⁴

Let it be remembered that the proceedings which we have detailed took place subsequently to the battle of Bothwell, when the feelings of the Covenanters had been irritated and inflamed by a continued series of shocking and brutal barbarities. At the period referred to in the Tale of *Old Mortality*, their minds were in a very different state. But we shall grant that the author was at liberty, in forming his likenesses, to take into view the character of the objects of persecution, after, as well as before, the affair of Bothwell. We appeal, then, to every impartial and intelligent person, if there was anything in the conduct of the Society People to warrant the representations which he has given.

¹ Wodrow, ii. 430. Howie, *Faithful Contendings*, p. 155.

² Wodrow, ii. 467. Renovation of Covenants at Lesmahago, p. 61.

³ *Informatory Vindication*, p. 63-68.

⁴ Howie, *ut supra*, p. 104.

Where are the ruffians and the madmen whom Burley and Mucklewrath resemble? Where is the transaction that bears the most distant resemblance to the horrid scene at Drumshinnel? Where are the principles, that, by the help of the utmost ingenuity, can be tortured into such a construction, as to favour that atrocious attempt? And what person of candour and of judgment can allege, that those who "positively disowned, as horrid murder, the killing of any because of a different persuasion and opinion from them," would have conspired to take away the life of such a person as Morton? We have read of a painter, known by the appellation of "Hellish Brueghell," who accustomed himself so much to painting witches, imps, and devils, that he sometimes made but little difference between his human and his infernal figures. The best apology we can make for our author is, that having been much habituated to the describing of moss-troopers, misanthropes, gypsies, and other beings of a savage or unnatural kind, he has been insensibly led to impart the qualities, so familiar to his mind, to the principal characters in the present work.

We are persuaded we shall give pleasure to our readers, by laying before them the following manly and liberal reflections of a living author on the transactions which we have been considering. "In the midst of the fiery furnace of persecution," says the eloquent Dr Charters, in a sermon now published a second time, "men appeared assuming the high character of witnesses for God, and maintaining it in the face of danger and death. Though few in number, like the gleanings of grapes after the vintage, and a few berries on the top of the outermost bough, they lifted up the fallen standard of religious liberty, and generously devoted themselves. They would swear no oaths, subscribe no bonds, take no test, nor yield to any imposition on conscience. They would not pray for the king, because that might be constructed as owning a title which, in their judgment, he had forfeited; and they resolved, whatever it might cost, to be ingenuous and open, decisive and unembarrassed, both in word and in deed. 'They published a seditious declaration, renouncing allegiance to Charles Stewart, whom they called, as they for their parts had indeed some reason to esteem him, a tyrant.'¹ They testified against all the arbitrary persecuting acts of Charles, and published acts of their own, disowning the king, excluding the Duke of York, and declaring war in defence of their religion and of their lives. The avowal of disaffection was the signal of death, and, by means of mercenary spies and traitors, many of them were seized and executed. They denounced vengeance on the spies, admonishing both the bloody Doegs and flattering Ziphites to remember, 'All that is in peril is not lost, and all that is delayed is not forgiven.' The coward race were appalled by a threatening that came from men without falsehood, and without fear. Their bold example attracted congenial spirits, and, like the Israelites in Egypt, the more they were afflicted, the more they grew

¹ Hume's History.

and multiplied. They formed into societies, and settled the ground and nature of their testimony. A love of liberty they considered as the national character, which it was their duty to maintain and transmit. A defensive war against tyranny they justified by the law of nature, and by precepts and doctrines in the Bible. To those who objected that their testimony was unexampled, they answered, the tyranny of the times is also without example : former examples arose from the state of things which produced them ; the present singular state of things demands a new example to after ages. Tyrants formerly used force, but they now demand an explicit owning of arbitrary power : the limitations of kingly power is a question which they compel us to decide ; and our example may instruct and animate posterity. Such were the principles of those whom Wodrow calls *Society People*, from the religious societies into which they were formed, and who, from the names of two of their leaders, were likewise called Cameronians and Cargillites. If, in some instances, they run to extremes, Solomon's saying will be remembered, 'Surely oppression maketh a wise man mad.' Their standard on the mountains of Scotland indicated to the vigilant eye of William that the nation was ripening for a change. They expressed what others thought, uttering the indignation and the groans of a spirited and oppressed people. They investigated and taught under the guidance of feeling, the reciprocal obligations of kings and subjects, the duty of self-defence, and of resisting tyrants, the generous principle of assisting the oppressed, or, in their language, *helping the Lord against the mighty*. These subjects, which have been investigated by philosophers in the closet, and adorned with eloquence in the senate, were then illustrated by men of feeling in the field. While Lord Russell, and Sidney, and other enlightened patriots in England, were plotting against Charles, from a conviction that his right was forfeited, the Cameronians in Scotland, under the same conviction, had the courage to declare war against him. Both the plotters and the warriors fell ; but their blood watered the plant of renown, and succeeding ages have eaten the pleasant fruit."¹

There are in the Tale of *Old Mortality*, beside what we have considered, several things which are deserving of reprehension. But we chose to enter into a particular examination of a few of its misstatements, rather than indulge in reflections upon the whole, which must necessarily have been general, and, consequently, less satisfactory. The charges of indulging in fraud and rapine, of hypocritically concealing mercenary and selfish designs under the cloak of zeal for religion, and of employing a jesuitical and wretched casuistry to vindicate such practices, which are laid in such a manner as to apply to the party at large, we deem so devoid of foundation in history, and so contrary to the known character of the Covenanters, as to be utterly unworthy of serious refutation. The allegation that they were of the

¹ Charters' Sermons, p. 273-277, edit. 1816.

same persecuting spirit as their adversaries, is, we are convinced, equally unfounded ; and we intended to have shown at some length, that their conduct after the Revolution was, upon the whole, highly commendable, considering the sufferings they had endured ; and that the charges of intolerance and persecution brought against some of their proceedings are founded, in a great degree, upon ignorance of the circumstances in which they were placed, and of the measures which they opposed. But this discussion we must waive, as it is high time to bring the review to a close.

We flatter ourselves that we have satisfactorily established the two leading positions that we advanced at the beginning of the review—the gross partiality which the author has shown to the persecutors of the Presbyterians, and the injustice which he has done to the objects of persecution. We have produced undeniable proofs of the former, in his withholding a just view of the severities and cruelties which they perpetrated, softening them in the representations which he has given, and exhibiting the character of some of the chief oppressors in such a light as to recommend them to the admiration of his readers. We have examined his representation of the Presbyterians or Covenanters, and have found it, in numerous instances, to be unfair, false, and grossly exaggerated. Instead of being the ignorant, foolish, and violent fanatics which he has held them out to be, we have shown that information was extensively diffused among them ; that they were a sober and religious people ; that their contentings and sufferings were directed to the support of the kindred cause of religion and liberty ; and that the instances of extravagance and violence really committed, were confined to a few, and extorted by grievous and insufferable oppression. We have also shown that the work is disfigured with profaneness, and that the author has used freedoms with religion, and the sacred language of the Scriptures, unjustifiable in any book, but altogether inexcusable in one that is intended for popular amusement. These faults we have exposed with freedom, and sometimes with feelings of indignation, but, we trust, without passion or irritation, and without the slightest wish to lower the talents or the fame of the author, farther than was unavoidable in doing justice to the cause which we were bound to advocate, and to the memory of the men who suffered in its defence. We look on the work which we have reviewed as calculated to produce mischievous effects, by circulating erroneous views of the history of our country, and by instilling bad principles into the minds of the ignorant and unwary. The fictitious form in which it is composed, we consider as serving to aggravate, instead of extenuating the offence. To sober statement and argumentative discussion upon any period of our history, or on the merits of those who acted a part in it, from whatever party these may proceed, we have no objection. But it appears to us that there is something extremely presumptuous and assuming in the very attempt to select the characters and proceedings described in this Tale as a subject

for ridicule and burlesque ; as if, in the opinion of sensible men of all parties, they were completely indefensible, and as if the truth of the facts which the author has brought forward, and the view which he has taken of them, were already placed beyond all reasonable doubt or contradiction. We trust, however, that the good sense of our countrymen, the information which they possess, and the regard which they still cherish to the cause of religion and freedom, will counteract the poison ; and we are not without hopes that this attempt may ultimately benefit the cause which it threatened to injure, by exciting more general attention to the subject, and by inducing persons to inquire more accurately into the facts of one of the most interesting portions of our national history.

TWO DISCOURSES

ON

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

HER DIVISIONS, AND THEIR REMOVAL

TO WHICH IS SUBJOINED

A SHORT VIEW OF THE PLAN OF RELIGIOUS REFORMATION

ORIGINALLY ADOPTED IN THE SECESSION

TWO DISCOURSES

ON

THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

DISCOURSE I.

"They shall be one in mine hand."—EZEK. xxxvii. 19.

THE reduction of the Jews from the Babylonian captivity was one of the most signal deliverances wrought in behalf of the ancient people of God. It was not, indeed, immediately affected by miraculous power and the exhibition of visible signs and wonders, like the eduction of their fathers from the house of bondage; but it was attended with the most convincing proofs of extraordinary providential interposition. And such was the magnitude of the mercy itself, the change on the national character which accompanied it, and the connection in which it stood with the ulterior plans of Heaven, that it so far threw into shade, and took the place of that deliverance which had hitherto been commemorated in the sacred invocations of every pious and patriotic Israelite. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be said, The Lord liveth, that brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but, The Lord liveth that brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the lands whither he had driven them."¹

This joyful event had been announced by the prophet Isaiah, who named Cyrus as the prince who should "say to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built, and to the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid." The period at which it would happen was defined in the prophecies of Jeremiah, which contain a magnificent description of the overthrow of Babylon. The predictions of Ezekiel, while they confirm those which had been previously given out, add to them facts which are deeply interesting and

¹ Jer. xvi. 14, 15; comp. Isa. xliii. 18, 19.

permanently instructive. In the preceding chapter we are told that God would not restore Israel to their own land, but also produce a change on their hearts and conduct. The whole house of Israel were polluted with guilt, and especially with the sin of idolatry. Neither mercies nor judgments had hitherto been sufficient to divorce and separate them from their idols. But their captivity and release should be sanctified and blessed for producing a real and lasting reformation. They should be made the objects of pardoning mercy, and the subjects of renewing grace. "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them."¹

Two objections of great force would present themselves to the minds of the Jews when told that their captivity should be turned back ; and these are removed in the chapter before us. Crushed under the irresistible power of their conquerors, trodden under foot, scattered, exanimated, they could only sigh out, "Our hope is lost ; we are cut off for our part !" To enable him to meet this objection, Ezekiel was "carried in the spirit" into the midst of a valley full of bones, bleached and dry ; and while he prophesied to them by divine direction, "Behold, the bones came together, bone to his bone," and on a sudden the appearance of the valley was changed from that of a field of slaughter into the site of a grand military review. Those whose "bones were scattered at the grave's mouth" stood up not only in the attitude of living men, but "every man in his own order," and all together united and marshalled—"an exceeding great army." The prophet then addressed the captives in God's name : "Behold, O my people, I will open your graves, and cause you to come up out of your graves,—and shall put my Spirit in you, and ye shall live."

This emblematical vision went far to solve the second objection, which is completely removed in the words of our text. He who believes in the resurrection of a dead people will not despair of the cure of a divided people. He who has seen "the bones come together, bone to his bone," is prepared to witness the congregating of living men, every one to his fellow. The second objection was founded on the dissension which had subsisted among the people of Israel since the death of Solomon, when ten tribes were violently rent from the royal house of David, and formed themselves into a separate and independent kingdom. What was at first a political division soon produced an ecclesiastical schism, and led to the establishment and practice of a worship at Dan and Bethel, different from, and opposite to, the worship of God at Jerusalem. This dissension between the families of Judah and Israel still

¹ Ezek. xxxvi. 25—27.

remained ; and was there no reason to fear, if they were restored to their own land, that, like “a root bearing wormwood and gall,” it would again “spring up and trouble them?” Against the fears of this, the prophet was instructed to comfort the “prisoners of hope,” first by exhibiting a sign, and then by explaining its meaning. In the instructions which God has been pleased to convey to men, sublimity is blended with condescension : the emblem formerly presented to the prophet was grand ; the sign which he now showed to the people was familiar. He was directed to take two sticks, or, as the word also signifies, *thin plates* of wood, so fashioned as that, when brought into contact, they should unite into one piece ; and having inscribed on them severally the distinctive names of the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel, he was to join them in his hand before the people. To their inquiry, “Show us what thou meanest by these,” he was to answer : “Thus saith the Lord ; Behold, I will take the stick of Joseph, and put it with the stick of Judah, and THEY SHALL BE ONE IN MINE HAND ;—they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.” They were to become one nation in respect not only of civil polity, but also of religious communion and privileges. For it is added : “I will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore :—my tabernacle also shall be with them ; yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

This promise was fulfilled on the restoration from the captivity, when the inveterate schism between Judah and Israel was perfectly healed. Some interpreters regard it as a prediction of what was to happen in New Testament times ; and we can scarcely doubt that the blessings promised, in all their extent, could only be enjoyed during this period : For it follows, “David,” a name often given to Messiah by the prophets, “my servant shall be King over them, and they shall have one shepherd.” And again : “My servant David shall be their prince for ever.” But without resting on this, we mean to take the primary application of the passage as a foundation for the subsequent discourse. There is a wonderful analogy in the divine dispensations towards the church at different periods. The duties, the temptations, the sins, the punishments, and the deliverances of the people of God in former times, are all instructive and admonitory. The Spirit of wisdom has selected for insertion in the inspired records, with more or less detail, those facts which were calculated to be most generally and permanently useful. In the New Testament the name of Babylon, and the language and imagery employed by the prophets in describing the power and the overthrow of that idolatrous and persecuting empire, are transferred to the reign and ruin of the Antichristian kingdom ; and upon the same principle, are not we warranted to apply, for “doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and instruction in righteousness,” the description of a contemporary mercy bestowed upon the church of God, which was intimately connected with her internal and most vital interests ?

On a text of this kind there is a danger of tracing analogies that are more fanciful and ingenious than real and solid, and of rearing general principles on the basis of accidental circumstances. We shall endeavour to guard against this, by keeping in eye the analogy of faith, and the lights thrown on the subject of our text from other parts of Scripture. The subject of discourse is the Divisions of the Church, and the remedy of this mournful malady. I propose not to treat it at large, but only to lay before you a few observations, which, through the blessing of the divine Spirit, may be useful for establishing your faith, and directing your exercise. The subject is not only of great extent; it is also of very delicate discussion. When we are beside *the waters of strife*, O how needful the perfect illumination—the mystic Urim and Thummim which was upon Levi, whom God “proved at Massah, and strove with at the waters of Meribah!” May we have our ears attent to “the word behind us,” *the Daughter of a Voice*,¹ saying, “This is the way; when we turn to the right hand, and when we turn to the left;” and may you have wisdom to “consider what we say,” and to “judge of your own selves what is right.”

For the sake of order I shall arrange what I have to say under the following heads:—

I. Of the Unity of the Church.

II. Of its Divisions.

III. Of the Removal of these, and the Restoration of its violated Unity.

I. I begin with the consideration of the Unity of the Church. For ages previous to the announcing of the oracle in our text, Judah and Israel had been divided into two nations in respect of civil concerns and of religious faith and practice; but God at first made them one. The Church of Christ has been divided for a still longer period, and to a still greater degree; but “from the beginning it was not so.” Originally it was one, and it ought still to be one, according to divine will and institution.

The Unity of the Church is implied in the most general view we can take of its nature, as a society instituted for religious purposes. True religion is essentially one, even as God, its object, is one. It, as its name imports, *binds* its professors to one another, as well as to the sole and common object of their supreme homage and service. It is indeed the great bond of human society in all its various and graduated relations; preserving the unity and peace of families, neighbourhoods, and nations, strengthening the subordinate ties by which they are connected, and preventing men from becoming a prey to each other, “as the fishes

¹ The Jewish writers say that God revealed his mind during the standing of the tabernacle by *Urim and Thummim*; during the first temple by *the Prophets*; and during the second by *Bath-kol*, or *the Daughter of a Voice*. This last, they suppose, is referred to in Isaiah xxx. 21.

of the sea, and as the creeping things that have no ruler." Hence, from the violation of the bonds of humanity, consanguinity, and mutual faith, so general among his countrymen, a prophet infers that they must have previously renounced the relation in which they stood to their common Parent: "Have we not all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother, by profaning the covenant of our fathers?"¹ If such is the remote and (if I may so call it) extrinsic influence of religion, what must its direct operation be within the pale of its own sacred enclosure?

Consider the church again in its more specific form, as a society consisting of men called out of the world lying in wickedness, and it will be still more evident that oneness is its attribute. It is founded on supernatural revelation — on the promise of a Saviour, and a divinely instituted worship. By their profession of faith in the former, and their observance of the latter, "the sons of God" were united in the patriarchal age. When an extensive system of ceremonial and sacrificial service, intended to prefigure the redemption to be procured by "the seed of the woman" and "of Abraham," as well as to preserve the knowledge of the one true God in the world, was superinduced on the original revelation, the nation of Israel was embodied into a church or sacred confederation, to be a peculiar people unto God, a holy nation, a kingdom of priests. God delights to speak of that people, as well as of himself, in the singular number: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord thy God is one Lord.—Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name."² "I will say, It is my people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God."³ The stranger who embraced the true religion, in "joining himself to the Lord," did at the same time "cleave to the house of Jacob," and "surname himself by the name of Israel."⁴ "One law and one manner, and one ordinance shall be for you of the congregation, and also for the stranger that sojourneth with you: as ye are, so shall the stranger be before the Lord."⁵ By the death of Christ, "the middle wall of partition—the law of commandments contained in ordinances," which was at the same time a token of the enmity between God and sinners, and an occasion of distance and alienation between Jews and Gentiles, was abolished; and believing Jews and Gentiles were reconciled to God and united into one body. But by being diffused the church was not divided; she did not lose her unity by becoming ecumenical, and being no longer confined to a single nation. When she received a command to "enlarge the place of her tent, and spread forth the curtains of her habitations," to receive the converts who came under her shelter, she was at the same time instructed to "lengthen her cords and strengthen her stakes."⁶ Divine wisdom made such changes on the external form of her worship

¹ Mal. ii. 10.

² Deut. vi. 4. x. 20.

³ Zech. xiii. 1.

⁴ Isa. lvi. 3. Comp. chap. xix. 1; xlv. 5.

⁵ Numb. xv. 15, 16.

⁶ Isa. liv. 9.

and communion as were adapted to the extended and continually enlarging ground which was now allotted to her. There was no longer to be a sacred house to serve as a visible centre of unity ; nor a material altar on which alone it was lawful to sacrifice ; nor a single family whose right it was exclusively to minister in the temple and at the altar. But still there remained visible bonds and badges of unity among the members of the Christian church. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism ; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."¹ "For we being many are one bread, and one body : for we are all partakers of that one bread."²

The unity of the church, in profession, worship, and holy walking, was strikingly exemplified in the primitive age of Christianity. Those who "gladly received the word were baptised and added to the church," consisting of the apostles and other disciples ; and they "continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers." And, after their number was still farther augmented by the addition of many thousands, "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul."³ This union was not confined to those who lived together, but all of them in every place formed one sacred "brotherhood." How solemn, earnest, and reiterated are the apostolical injunctions to preserve this unity, and to avoid everything that has a tendency to violate or mar it ! "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you ; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."⁴ "I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love ; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."⁵ "If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind :—that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel."⁶ "Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another according to Christ Jesus ; that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁷

It will assist us in forming correct notions on this subject, if we attend to certain distinctions which are commonly made in treating it. We usually speak of the church of the *Old* and of the *New* Testament, or the *Jewish* and *Christian* churches. But the difference between these is only in degree, not specifical or essential. The change made on her external form and institutions, at the coming of Christ, though great,

¹ Eph. iv. 4—6.² 1 Cor. x. 17.³ Acts ii. 41, 42 ; iv. 32.⁴ 1 Cor. i. 10.⁵ Eph. iv. 1—3.⁶ Philip. i. 27 ; ii. 1, 2.⁷ Rom. xv. 5, 6.

did not destroy the oneness of the church ; just as our personal identity is not affected by the changes which we undergo, in body and mind, while we pass from childhood to maturity. She remained the same, as the heir does after reaching majority, although no longer under tutors and governors ; and as the olive tree does after a great part of its natural branches have been broken off, and others, taken from a wild tree, have been grafted in their room.¹—Again, it is usual to distinguish between the *invisible* and *visible* church. The former consists of such only as are true believers and real saints ; the latter of all who make a public profession of the true religion. But this does not imply that there are two churches, but only that the same society is considered in a different point of view. Nor is it a division of the whole into its parts. It does not mean, that one part of the church is visible and the another invisible ; but it means, that all who make a profession of the faith compose the church considered as visible, while those among them who are endued with true faith constitute the church considered as invisible. The former includes the latter ; and it is sometimes spoken of in Scripture under the one and sometimes under the other view. But whether the church of Christ be viewed in its internal or external state, unity is still its attribute. All genuine saints are invisibly and vitally united to Christ, and to one another, by the indissoluble bond of the Spirit and of faith ; and in virtue of this it is that they increase in love and holiness, and are at last made “perfect in one.” Some of the particulars specified in the passages of Scripture quoted above refer more immediately to this invisible union ; but others of them are as evidently descriptive of the character and privileges of a visible society, actuated by the spirit of true religion, and subsisting in a state of due subjection to the word and laws of Christ. Again, the church may be considered either as *catholic* or as *particular*. This distinction is not inconsistent with its unity any more than the former. The visible church considered as catholic or universal, consists of all those throughout the world who profess the true religion, together with their children. The variety of particular churches, when regularly constituted, does not imply any separation from, or opposition to, one another. The catholic church subsists in, and is composed of, the several particular churches, of larger or less extent, in the different parts of the Christian world ; and none of these are to be excluded from it as long as they retain the true and distinctive characters of such a society as the Word of God describes it to be. That these particular churches should be sometimes found disunited, and in many respects opposed to one another, is an accidental circumstance arising from their imperfect state and corruption. So far as this is the case catholic unity is marred ; yet this does not prevent them from having still some common points of union, and a common relation to the universal body—the one great diffusive flock, family, and kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ Gal. iv. 1—3, 8, 9. Rom. xi. 17—24.

Christianity, being intended for general diffusion through the world, must in its nature be adapted to all countries and people. It would be extreme weakness to suppose, that its being embraced by people of different garbs, colour, and language, of different manners and customs, barbarous or civilised, or formed into distinct civil communities, and living under different forms of government, produces different religions, or a diversity of churches, provided their faith and practice are intrinsically the same. Their formularies of faith and religious service may be differently expressed or arranged, and they may vary from one another in different circumstances in external administrations, which are not, and could not be, prescribed by positive rule in Scripture, and which (to use a much abused word) may be called circumstantial, without marring that unity of faith and that fellowship which belongs to different Christian societies, as parts of the same general body. Nor is simple ignorance in some and knowledge in others, with respect to some things which belong to the Christian system, or greater and less degrees of advancement in different churches, or in the members of the same church, necessarily inconsistent with religious unity and peace. But there must be no denial or restriction of the supreme authority by which everything in religion is ruled ; no open and allowed hostility to truth and godliness ; and no such opposition of sentiments, or contrariety of practices, as may endanger the faith, or destroy the constitution and edification of churches, or as may imply, in different churches, or in different parts of the same church, a condemnation of one another.

As there were synagogues among the Jews, so there must be assemblies among Christians for divine worship and instruction, and for the exercise of discipline. The unity of the church requires that we join in communion with our fellow Christians, in the place where providence has cast our lot, provided they are found walking by the common rule of Christianity, and as long as no sinful bar is laid in the way of such a conjunction. And our statedly holding communion with a particular church is the ordinary way of manifesting our communion with the catholic church. But as individual Christians are not at liberty to walk and act singly, so neither are particular congregations at liberty to act as independent and disjointed societies. For the ordinary performance of religious duties, and the ordinary management of their own internal affairs, they may be said to be complete churches, and furnished with complete powers. But extraordinary cases will arise among themselves from time to time ; and there are, besides, duties, dangers, and interests, which do not properly or exclusively concern one congregation, or a few congregations, and which require the joint cognisance and co-operation of many. This is taught by the light of nature itself, it flows from the oneness of the church of Christ, and is clearly exemplified in the New Testament. Being similar parts of the same general body, it is the duty of particular churches to draw together, to combine,

and to co-operate, according as this may be practicable, and as providence may open a door for it, with a view to mutual help and the promotion of the common cause in which they are all engaged. They may agree in explicitly approving of the same articles of faith and rules of discipline, and in yielding a scriptural subjection to a common authority in the Lord. Such confederations, on the Presbyterian plan, are fully warranted by the Word of God, and are most congenial to the spirit of Christianity, which is catholic and diffusive ; they may include all the churches in the same neighbourhood, in the same nation, or even in many nations ; and by means of them that unity which belongs essentially to the whole church of Christ is formally recognised, and its bonds are strengthened and drawn more close.

Is it then asked, What is the bond of unity in the church ? the reply may be given in one word—The true religion. Religion as communicated by God to men in the Bible, is its grand comprehensive bond. This specificates and distinguishes it from the unity which belongs to other societies. The sacred Scriptures not only exhibit the model after which the church is to be constructed ; they also furnish that which gives it substance, and stability, and order, and proportion, and unity. It is “built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone ; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord.”¹ But, before leaving this part of the subject, it may be proper to specify more particularly some of the scriptural bonds of unity in the church.

1. This unity consists in her having one Head and Lord. This is Jesus Christ, whom the “one God and Father of all” has appointed over his house. “Holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God.”² All real believers are internally joined to the Lord, and derive their spiritual life and growth from Him ; and in like manner must Christians, in their associated capacity, be in professed subjection to Him, in his divine mediatorial authority, as the one universal Pastor, and sole Head of government. To admit a temporal head of the church, whether pope or king ; to call any man master in religion ; or to enlist ourselves under the banners of any human leader, is to sin against the first precept of Christian unity.

2. The unity of the faith. “There is one body,” because there is “one faith.” A system of faith or of revealed truth, as well as of duties, has in every age formed an essential and important part of true religion. By embracing this the church is distinguished from other societies, and it belongs to her faithfully to confess and hold it forth to the world. An owning of the whole faith is implied in her reception of the Scriptures ; she is bound to obey the calls of providence in explicitly confessing and contending for particular articles of it ; and there is no article of divine truth that may not at one time or another become the object of this duty,

¹ Eph. ii. 20, 21.

² Col. ii. 19.

and consequently a test of her fidelity. Hence, she is called "the city of truth," as well as "the habitation of righteousness;" her gates are open to receive "the righteous nation that keepeth the truth;" and truth is inscribed on her columns, and on the banners which float on her walls and bulwarks. When this is not the case, Christian societies are destitute of the unity of the church of Christ, by whatever ties they may be kept together.

3. "One baptism," and fellowship in the same acts of worship. Baptism is a solemn badge of Christian profession, as well as a sign of the grace and privileges of the New Covenant. According to the proper and original design of this ordinance, and the profession accompanying it, all the baptised are made one, and a foundation is laid for their mutual fellowship in all acts of worship. The institutions of the Gospel were intended as a bond of union among Christians, and by the joint celebration of them their communion is maintained and expressed. "By one Spirit we are all baptised into one body." "And being many we are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread," in the sacramental communion.¹ It is not necessary to this unity that Christians should all meet for worship in the same place. This is physically impossible; nor are we to conceive of church communion as local. It consists in their celebrating the same holy ordinances—in their performing acts of worship the same in kind, wherever they assemble, and in their being disposed and ready to embrace every proper occurring opportunity to join with all "those who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ, the Lord, both theirs and ours." Thus it was, as we have seen, in the primitive church; and thus it would still be, if catholic unity were preserved, and if the institutions of Christ, along with the faith to which they relate, were everywhere preserved pure and entire.

4. Unity in respect of external government and discipline. Christ, the Head of the church, "gave pastors and teachers—helps, governments, for the work of the ministry, for the gathering together of the saints, for the edifying of the body, till they all come in the unity of the faith, and knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man."² The exercise of authority and government is necessary as a bond of union and a basis of stability, in all societies. By means of it the largest communities, and even many nations, may be made to coalesce and become one, under the same political government. And can any good reason be assigned for supposing that the church of Christ should be destitute of this bond, or that it should not be necessary to her union as a visible society? If every family has its economy and discipline, if every kingdom has its form of government and laws, shall we suppose that the most perfect of all societies, "the house of the living God," and "the kingdom of heaven," should be left by her divine Head without that which so evidently tends to the maintenance of her faith, the purity and regu-

¹ 1 Cor. x. 17; xii. 13.

² Eph. iv. 11—13; 1 Cor. xii. 28.

larity of her administrations, and the order, subordination, unity, and peace which ought to reign among all her members? Whatever is necessary to her government, and the preserving of her order and purity, either is expressly enjoined in Scripture, or may be deduced, by native inference, from the general rules and the particular examples which are recorded in it.

5. The bond of mutual charity and peace. This is the silken cord which ought to be thrown over all the others, and which makes Christian union complete. Hence, charity, or love, is called by an apostle a perfect bond: "Above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness."¹ A vague and erratic charity, which soars above fixed principles of belief, looks down with neglect on external ordinances, and spurns the restraint of ordinary rules, whether it seeks to include all Christians within its catholic embrace, or confines itself to those of a favourite class, is a very feeble and precarious bond of union. True Christian charity is the daughter of truth, and fixes on her objects "for the truth's sake which dwelleth in them." On the other hand, a bare and cold agreement in the articles of a common faith, and external uniformity in the acts of worship and discipline, will not preserve the unity of the church. To "be perfectly joined together," Christians must be of "the same mind," or affection, as well as of "the same judgment." It is by "speaking the truth in love" that they "grow up in all things to their Head, even Christ." Love must cement the union which faith has formed; and it is by the joint influence of both that Christians "cleave to the Lord," and to one another in Him, "with purpose of heart." Without mutual affection, and its kindred graces, mutual consideration, and condescension, and compassion, forgiveness will not be extended towards injuries, forbearance will not be exercised towards unavoidable infirmities, offences will arise, alienations will be produced, and "the brotherly covenant will not be remembered." Hence the frequency and the fervour with which the cultivation of a loving and peaceful temper is enjoined upon Christians. "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."² "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."³ "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."⁴ "Finally, brethren,—Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you."⁵

¹ Col. iii. 14.² Col. iii. 12, 13.³ Eph. iv. 31, 32.⁴ Philip. ii. 3, 4.⁵ 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

II. I now go on to speak of the Divisions by which the unity of the church is marred. Judah and Israel, originally one, and bound together by the most sacred ties, were rent asunder, and formed into two independent nations, divided in worship, as well as in secular and political interests. And this was followed by the usual effects of such breaches—rivalship, hatred, and mutual hostilities. “Ephraim envied Judah, and Judah vexed Ephraim.”¹ The same thing has happened to the Christian church.

1. God has permitted the unity of his church to be broken in different ways. It has been marred and interrupted when her members continued to meet together, and to keep up the external forms of fellowship as one society. This is the case, when, instead of glorifying God with one mouth, and striving together for the faith of the Gospel, they entertain jarring and discordant sentiments about the articles of religion, and one is eager to destroy what another is building; when they do not walk by the same rule nor mind the same things; when they fall into factions and parties, and when contention and every evil work—hatred, variance, jealousies, heartburnings, and evil surmisings, rage among them. The spirit of division had begun to produce these bitter and pernicious fruits in the church at Corinth, even in apostolical times. “It hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, that there are contentions among you. Every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptised in the name of Paul?”² “First of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you, and I partly believe it.”—“I fear, lest when I come, I shall not find you such as I would,—lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults.”³

Disorders and animosities of this kind may abate and gradually settle into a calm, without the restoration of true peace. When a church no longer holds the Head, but suffers the supreme authority of Christ in his spiritual kingdom to be invaded or shared by any creature; when the liberties and immunities which he has conferred on her, as an independent society, are usurped or surrendered; when her faith is subverted, her worship corrupted by human inventions, or her order and discipline overthrown; in such a case the bonds of scriptural unity are dissolved. Resistance may be overcome by the despotical exercise of usurped authority, opposition may die away under the paralysing influence of an irreligious indifference and neutrality; but the union which is brought about by such means is an ungodly confederacy, and the tranquillity which is enjoyed by such a society is like the calm which binds the stagnant and deleterious waters of the Dead Sea.

At other times, the dissensions which arise in the church prevail and grow to such a height as to produce an open rupture, and the formation of separate and opposing communions. Even those who live in

¹ Isaiah, xi. 13.

² 1 Cor. i. 11, 12, 13.

³ 1 Cor. xi. 18; 2 Cor. xii. 20.

the same place, and who had formerly "taken sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company," no longer join in the same acts of public and social worship. Altar is reared against altar, as if they did not serve the same God. One house can no longer contain them. One name can no longer serve them; but they must be distinguished from one another, as well as from the world. This has hitherto been the state of the Christian church almost in every age. In reviewing her history she appears not as one great army marshalled under the banner of "the Captain of salvation," but as "the company of two armies," yea, often of many armies, with banners bearing different and opposite inscriptions, and engaged in hostilities with one another as well as with the common enemy of the church of the living God. Thus, in ancient times, not to mention various lesser sects, the church was divided into Greeks and Latins; in more modern times, Protestants have been divided into Lutherans and Calvinists, and in our own land into Episcopalians, Presbyterians, and Independents, with a great variety of other denominations, which it would be painful and impossible to enumerate.

While we survey these mournful facts, my brethren, we must not overlook the hand of God; and it is proper to advert to this before proceeding to inquire into the immediate and proper sources of the evil. The malignant spirit could not sow the seeds of dissension and division, nor could they grow up and spread, without the permission of the Lord of the vineyard. He has wise and holy ends for permitting them; and among others we ought to be deeply affected with this, that he sends them as a punishment to a people called by his name. Do any ask, How comes it about that those who are joined by so many sacred bonds, should be so broken and divided in judgment and affection? The answer is: "The anger of the Lord hath divided them."¹ Yes; when they fall from their first love to the Gospel, receive the grace of God in vain, do not bring forth fruit unto holiness under his ordinances, become conformed to the world, and have little more than a name to live—when they become vain of their numbers and their strength, and convert a holy union into a criminal combination, He permits the demon of discord to enter among them, "confounds their language, that so they cannot understand one another's speech,"—"divides them in Jacob and scatters them in Israel." "It is my desire," says he, "that I should chastise them, when they shall bind themselves in their two furrows;"² alluding to the practice of the husbandman who corrects a refractory steer when caught in the situation described in the metaphor which is employed. The conduct of God toward his ancient people is described under a beautiful allegory in the prophecies of Zechariah. When he saw his flock a prey to their possessors, and sold by their own pitiless shepherds, he exclaimed, "I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the

¹ Lam. iv. 16.² Hos. x. 10.

one I called BEAUTY, and the other I called BANDS; and I fed the flock." But they requited him ungratefully; their soul abhorred him, and his soul loathed them. "Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another. And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people." And a little after: "Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel."¹ The grand schism by which ten tribes were rent from the house of David was expressly denounced as a punishment for the sin of Solomon and his people in forsaking God.² And when the flame, instead of being extinguished, has fresh fuel added to it, and continues to spread and burn from age to age with increasing fury, it is a proof that God's "anger is not turned away, but his hand is stretched out still," as it was when "Manasseh devoured Ephraim, and Ephraim Manasseh, and they together Judah."³

2. Divisions in the church are owing to various causes. In permitting them God overrules the instrumentality of men who are actuated by different motives and principles, for which they are entirely responsible. It is incumbent on all Christians to "endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The violation of it must be traced to a sinful cause. When dissensions arise in the church of God, and it is divided into parties, whatever the occasion or matter of variance be, there must be guilt somewhere. The rules of truth, peace, and holy fellowship, have been transgressed; and those who are justly chargeable with this cannot be blameless. Amid the keen contests and opposing pretensions of parties, it may often be difficult to determine where the blame lies; but it must attach to one side or another, and perhaps to both. It will not always attach to the minority, or those who may be forced to withdraw from the assemblies and external communion of particular churches: the major and prevailing party may be the real schismatics, though not the formal separatists. This, however, we know, that Scripture has affixed a mark of disapprobation on those who "cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which we have received."⁴

The dissensions which prevail in the church, like those which distract and break the peace of other societies, may be traced in general to the workings of human corruption. "Whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?"⁵ They spring from the ignorance, error, unbelief, prejudice, pride, passion, selfishness, carnality, which are predominant in the minds of some of the members of the church, and are but partially subdued and mortified in the minds of the best. To specify all the ways in which these principles operate to the disturbance of the peace of the church is impracticable.

¹ Zech. xi. 7—14.² 1 Kings, xi. 11; xii. 15.³ Isa. ix. 21.⁴ Rom. xvi. 17.⁵ James, iv. 1.

They lead to the adoption and patronage of errors, by which the purity of the faith and institutions of Christ is depraved. This in itself, as we have seen, loosens the scriptural bonds of union. But as the faithful consider themselves bound to resist everything of this kind, the propagation of errors cannot fail to excite contention and strife in the bosom of the church. Some of these errors strike against the principal and leading articles of the faith, and are in their very nature damnable and destructive to the souls of those who embrace them. Others consist of uncertain, vain, and unprofitable opinions, the offspring of an unsanctified fancy or of the love of novelty, calculated to unsettle the minds of the hearers, and inducing perverse disputings and endless questions. Others again strike more immediately against the unity and peace of the church—loose and extravagant notions respecting private judgment, conscience, and Christian liberty, by which these rights, invaluable when duly understood and regulated, are explained and stated in such a way as to convert all religion into a matter of individual belief and concern, to render union and co-operation among its professors impracticable or precarious, and to contradict the important truth, that “the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another.”¹ This is the case, when the duty of Christians at large is explained in such a way as to encroach on the office of a regular Gospel ministry; when the lawfulness of confessions of human composure, as public declarations of the faith of a church, and their usefulness as tests of orthodoxy, though conformable in their matter to Scripture, and necessary in times of abounding error among persons professing Christianity, are impugned; when ecclesiastical office-bearers are stripped of that authority which is competent to them, and necessary for preserving order and subordination, and the supreme power of finally determining every cause is lodged with the whole people in every worshipping congregation; when the combination of particular congregations, as parts of an extended and organised body, with a duly limited submission to a common judicatory for taking cognisance of differences which may arise in any part of that body, and judging of what concerns the good of the whole, is opposed; and, in fine, to pass over other tenets of a similar description which are rampant in the present age, when the lawfulness of the settlement of a system of religion in a nation, by the joint concurrence of ecclesiastical and civil authority, and with the general consent of the people, is contradicted and opposed. Sectarianism, as the class of opinions referred to is usually called, is inimical to the unity of the church, as it has a direct tendency to foster diversity of sentiment and practice in religion, and to multiply schisms. If the common sense and experience of mankind did not check its operation, and prevent its keenest abettors from acting rigidly and consistently on their

¹ Westm. Conf. of Faith, chap. xx. § 4.

own principles, it would lead to the dissolution of all religious society, or at best to the rearing of a Babel, the foundations of which would be laid on its first-born, and the gates of it set up on its youngest and most favourite son. To these may be added rigid notions respecting ecclesiastical communion, incompatible with the imperfect state of the church in this world, whether these manifest themselves in requiring that all Christians should reach the same degree of the scale in their acquaintance with divine things, or in withdrawing from the communion of a church on account of particular acts of maladministration, or because discipline may not, in some instances, be exercised on offenders with faithfulness, or with all that severity which they may think proportioned to the nature of the offence ; which was the error charged on the ancient Novatians and Donatists.

Divisions in the church may often be traced to a spirit of vanity, pride, and ambition. Than this, nothing can be more repugnant to the spirit of Christianity, or prejudicial to ecclesiastical peace. It is often found combined with a spirit of error, and has formed a very prominent feature in the character of heresiarchs and the founders of sects. It displays itself sometimes in an overweening fondness for their own private opinions, and at other times in the love of pre-eminence, or an impatience of contradiction, by which they are instigated to the adoption of factious and divisive courses. Others are impelled to divide the church by the base desire of gratifying their avarice, and procuring a livelihood from the disciples whom they draw after them. Such are the "unruly and vain talkers and deceivers" described by Paul, "who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake," and those whom another apostle charges "with beguiling unstable souls,—following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness."¹

Tyranny and unreasonable imposition has been one fruitful source of division in the church. To gratify the lust of dominion, those calling themselves clergy have assumed a power of decreeing articles of faith and imposing forms of worship, contrary or additional to those enjoined in Scripture ; have, like the Pharisees, "bound heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and laid them on men's shoulders, while they themselves would not move them with one of their fingers ;" and have enforced the rigid observance of these commandments of men, by all the force and terrors which they possessed or could command. Like the shepherds of ancient Israel, they have scattered the flock by ruling over it "with force and with cruelty." Forgetting the nature and limits of the power with which they have been intrusted, and their own complaints against papal and prelatical usurpations, Protestant and Presbyterian courts have acted "as lords over God's heritage," trampled on the sacred rights of conscience, stripped the Christian people of liberties which their divine Master had conferred on them, and which

¹ Tit. i. 11 ; 2 Pet. ii. 14, 15.

they were in the undisputed possession of for several centuries after his ascension, intruded hirelings on them for overseers, and driven those who resisted their arbitrary measures to seek the food of their souls in separate communions. The policy of statesmen has often combined with the ambition of churchmen in measures which have tended to divide the church. Jeroboam erected his schismatical worship at Dan and Bethel to keep himself and his family on the throne of Israel ; for, said he, " if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah."¹ The support which civil rulers have given to corrupt systems of religion and to oppressive administrations in the church, may very frequently be traced to this origin.

While the church has been frequently divided by a spirit of unwarrantable and arbitrary impositions, so, on the other hand, the same effect has been sometimes produced by aversion to the strictness of ecclesiastical communion, and impatience of that submission which is fully warranted by the Word of God. When a church has been constituted conformably to the Scripture pattern, makes a faithful confession of the truth, and maintains good order and discipline agreeably to the laws of Christ, a divisive spirit is evinced by those who factiously exclaim against its severity, enter into schemes, open or covert, for relaxing its bonds, or form themselves into another society connected by looser and more general ties ; whether this be done to obtain greater latitude to themselves, or with the view of uniting persons of opposite religious sentiments and practices in one general and catholic communion. This follows from the doctrine already laid down respecting the true bonds of ecclesiastical unity. In like manner the peace of the church may be broken by the insubordination and turbulence of the Christian people, refusing subjection to those pastors who are regularly set over them, and who act within the due limits of their authority, and setting up the ancient cry, " All the congregation are holy, every one of them." In this case the event often remarkably verifies the prediction of the apostle : " The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine ; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears ; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth to fables."²

3. Divisions in the church sometimes become inveterate, and it is a work of extreme difficulty to heal them. It is easy to divide, but not so easy to unite. A child may break or take to pieces an instrument which it will baffle the most skilful to put together and repair. If Rehoboam had listened to the advice of " the old men that stood before Solomon his father," he might have preserved his kingdom entire ; but all their wisdom and authority could not cure the schism which had been caused by his following the rash and foolish counsel of " the young men who were grown up with him."

¹ 1 Kings, xii. 27.

² 2 Tim. iv. 3, 4.

Attempts to reunite must encounter the resistance of those corrupt principles and passions which led to division. The force of these is sometimes greatly increased by indulgence, and parties become more and more alienated from one another by mutual injuries and recriminations; for "the beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water."¹ If time has served to allay the heat and fierceness of controversy, and to smooth down the harshness and asperities of personal animosity, it has perhaps contributed to widen the breach in another way. It has added to the original grounds of difference and separation. Parties at variance are inclined to remove to a distance from each other. They are apt not only to magnify the real point in dispute, but also to create or discover new ones, with the view of vindicating their separation, and enlarging the charges which they bring against their opponents. The adoption, too, of one error, and the defence of one sinful practice, leads to the adoption and defence of another, and that of a third; so that when an individual or a society has turned from the right way, every step they take carries them farther astray, and removes them to a greater distance from those who have been enabled to keep the path of truth and duty. The consequence is, on either of these suppositions, that, when proposals of accommodation come to be made, and a treaty of reunion is set on foot, the original cause of the breach forms perhaps the smallest matter of difference between the parties, and instead of one point, twenty may require to be disposed of and adjusted in the progress of the negotiations. This was strikingly verified in the attempts made in the seventeenth century to reconcile the Lutheran and Calvinistic churches. If the law of Patronage had been abrogated soon after its imposition, the peace of the Church of Scotland might have been preserved, and many of those dissensions and separations which have since occurred would have been prevented; but who that knows anything of the state of matters will say, that the adoption of such a measure at this late period, however desirable on many accounts, and whatever good results it would lead to in the issue, would put an end to our present divisions, or even unite all those who are the friends of evangelical doctrine and presbyterian principles?—Sometimes, indeed, matters take a different direction. Two parties, after separating and pursuing for some time opposite courses, receive a new direction from the common impulse of the spirit of the age, and the prevailing current of religious sentiment and feeling, by means of which they are made gradually to approximate, and at last to meet at a point very remote from that from which both of them set out. In this case, if they were right before they parted, they must now be wrong. When defection from the purity of religion has become general, and indifference about truth abounds, such coalescences are easily brought about. If political considerations had not intervened, it would have been no difficult matter to have joined Judah and Israel in religious fellowship during

¹ Prov. xvii. 14.

the reign of Ahaz. It is upon a principle of the same kind, I am afraid, that we must account for the union which has lately been effected in some parts of the Continent between the two great bodies of Protestants.

It is particularly difficult to heal the divisions which subsist among those who are intermingled and live together in the same country and vicinity. If distance of place, by preventing intercourse, keeps Christians in ignorance of one another's sentiments and characters, and fosters misapprehensions and groundless prejudices, neighbourhood gives rise to other and greater evils. It is a species of intestine warfare which is carried on between religious parties who reside together. The irritation produced by the frequent opportunities which individuals find for agitating their disputes is an evil which ordinarily cures itself in process of time. But their interests as separate societies, founded on opposite principles, necessarily interfere and clash. A spirit of proselytism is engendered. They draw disciples from one another; mutual reprisals are made; advantages are oftentimes taken which would be held not the most honourable in political warfare; and each may be said to flourish and grow by the decay and decrease of the rest.

The subject of litigation among Christians, and even the relation which they stand in to one another as such, render the adjustment of their differences more delicate and embarrassing. It is always a work of difficulty to reconcile hostile parties, whatever the matter of strife may happen to be. Once involved in litigation about civil rights and property, men, not of the most contentious or obstinate tempers, have been known to persevere until they had ruined themselves and their families. When unhappily discord and contention arise between those who are allied by blood, or who were united by the bonds of close friendship, their variance is of all others the most inveterate and deadly. "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city; and their contentions are like the bars of a castle."¹ If "love is strong as death, jealousy is cruel as the grave." Of all the ties which bind man to man, religion is the most powerful, and when once loosened or burst asunder, it is the hardest to restore. Religious differences engage and call into action the strongest powers of the human mind. Conscience comes to the aid of convictions of right, and zeal for the glory of God combines with that jealousy with which we watch over everything that is connected with our own reputation. It has often been remarked, that religious disputes are managed with uncommon warmth and acrimony; and this has been urged as an argument against all controversies of the kind, and even as an argument against religion itself. It cannot be denied, that, amid the din of disputation, that important truth, "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God," has often been forgotten by the contending parties; and the personal altercations, the railing accusations, the uncharitable judgments, the rash censures, the

¹ Prov. xviii. 19.

wilful misrepresentations, the injurious calumnies, which have too often infused their malignant and poisonous virus into these debates, have, it must be confessed, contributed to bring great scandal on religion ; though this sacred cause can never justly be made responsible in any degree for excesses so inconsistent with its spirit and its precepts. But let us not be unjust in seeking to be liberal. Genuine moderation and candour are not to be confounded with indifference and lukewarmness. Religion is of paramount importance, and we ought not to wonder that those who are in earnest about it should display a warm and fervent zeal in the cause. They do not feel themselves at liberty to make the same sacrifices to peace in the "matters of the Lord," which they may be warranted and willing to make in their own. They must "buy the truth, but not sell it." True religion is an entailed inheritance, which they are bound to preserve and transmit, unalienated and unimpaired, to their posterity, "that the generation to come may know it, even the children that shall be born, who shall arise and declare it to their children." They are only "stewards of the mysteries of God, and it is required in stewards, that they be found faithful." In proportion, therefore, as they are persuaded that the honour of God, and the interests of truth, and the welfare of souls are concerned in the subjects which are litigated, and enter into the grounds of difference between them and other Christians, it may be expected that they will show themselves firm and tenacious. And, as this must be supposed to be the persuasion of persons of different parties, and indeed of all who maintain a separate communion on conscientious principles, it is easy to perceive what an obstacle it presents in the way of conciliation and union.

Feelings of personal offence and injury form no inconsiderable obstacle in the way of removing divisions in the church. In one degree or another these are unavoidable, when religious differences arise and grow to a height. They are no proper ground of separation, and the recollection of them ought not to be allowed to stand in the way of a desirable reunion. If in any instance personal injury has been combined with injuries done to truth, those who have been the sufferers need to exert the utmost jealousy over their own spirits. Self-love will lead us insensibly to confound and identify the two ; and what we flatter ourselves to be pure zeal for religion and hatred of sin, may, in the process of a rigid and impartial examination, be found to contain a large mixture of resentment for offences which terminated on ourselves. Perhaps we have, while endeavouring to act faithfully, been evil entreated by those with whom we were connected in church fellowship. If we permit a sense of this to rankle in our breasts, or even to live in our recollections, if by recurring to it in our conversations, although without any angry or revengeful feelings, we transfuse it into the minds of others, this will infallibly operate in preventing or embarrassing any negotiation for peace, however fair and promising in

itself. Or, let us reverse the case. Perhaps we have behaved ourselves unkindly and harshly to our brethren ; we may have been instrumental in spoiling them of their goods for conscience' sake ; we may, from mistake or misapprehensions of them, have cast out their names as evil—reproached, misrepresented, calumniated them. Let not the consciousness of this keep us at a distance from them ; let us not do them farther injury by harbouring the thought that they cannot forgive or forget the offences which they have received. They are men “of another spirit ;” they know how much need they themselves have of forgiveness ; and will be forward to prevent our acknowledgments, and dissipate our apprehensions, by saying to us, not in the spirit of assumed superiority, but in the bowels of brotherly kindness, “Be not grieved, neither be angry with yourselves.”

In surveying the causes which obstruct a desirable reunion of Christians, we cannot overlook the influence of party-spirit, and unreasonable respect to the credit of particular sects and denominations. The only thing that can warrant the establishment of separate communions is their being necessary for asserting and maintaining the purity of the truths and institutions of Christ. As soon as this object is gained, they become unnecessary and useless, and ought to cease and disappear. It is not the name of any party, or of its founder or leader, but the name of Jesus Christ, that must “endure for ever,” and every true lover of Him will be disposed to say with his harbinger, “He must increase, but I must decrease,” and will rejoice in seeing the saying verified. Provided the scriptural doctrines which they have been honoured to maintain be acknowledged and embraced, the enlightened friends of religion will cheerfully consent that the names of Protestants, and Calvinists, and Presbyterians, and Seceders, together with the parties designated by them, should be forgotten and sunk in the more honourable and catholic name by which “the disciples were first called at Antioch.” But is this spirit common, even in an age advancing high claims to liberality ? How ready are we to associate our own honour with that of the religious society to which we belong, and under the influence of this compound feeling to forget the paramount homage we owe to that “Name which is above every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come !” How much does this enter into our public contentings ! What regard is often shown to it in negotiations for union ! Victory, not truth, is too often the object of litigant parties ; and provided they can gain this, though it should be achieved by over-reaching one another, and by practising the low tricks of a worldly policy, they will boast of a religious triumph. Every candid and observing person will admit, too, that, in those religious denominations which have truth and right on their side, there are persons whose choice has not been determined by enlightened views of the importance of the cause which they have espoused, and who would stoutly resist every conciliatory measure from attachment to certain venerated

names, from early associations, and preference of some external forms, which have varied in different periods and places without any infringement of the laws of Christ, or any real injury to Christian edification. Even those who are not averse to sacrifice truth to peace often show themselves keen sticklers for the credit of a party, and rather than compromise it in the slightest degree, or admit the most distant reflection on themselves or their associates, would break off or endanger the success of the most promising and reasonable overtures. With them the question is not, Can we make such concessions and accede to such terms, without relinquishing truth, and acting unfaithfully to God? but, Can we do this without constructively confessing that we have been so far in an error, and acknowledging that others have been more righteous, or honest, or intelligent than we? My brethren, these things ought not so to be. So long as a spirit of this kind prevails, every attempt at healing divisions in the church will prove abortive, or will lead to such general, ambiguous, or contradictory arrangements, as merely cover over the disease, while they plant the seeds of future disquiet and disunion.

In fine, self-interest will be found a hinderance to this desirable event. How general the influence of this principle is among professed Christians in the best of times, appears from the apostle's exclamation, "All seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ!" When undefined and sinful schemes of union and comprehension happen to be popular, self-interest will prove a powerful temptation to unfaithfulness. But it has, in every age, clogged the wheels of those noble undertakings which had for their object the public good of human society. When religious parties are established in great numbers, and have subsisted for a long period of time, the interests of individuals may come in various ways to be involved in their support and maintenance. Liberal notions often float in the head, while the heart is contracted with selfishness; and many who exclaim loudly against bigotry would not disarrange their connections, nor sacrifice their worldly interest, to promote a measure the most decidedly advantageous to religion, and to the general welfare and peace of the Church of Christ.

If these considerations be duly weighed, we will not be greatly surprised that so little progress has been made in the work of composing differences among Christians. Since the period of the Reformation, attempts of this kind have been frequently made in reference to various parties; some proposing to unite the denominations commonly called evangelical, or which differ only as to forms of government and worship; others extending their views to Armenians and Calvinists; while others have engaged in the preposterous undertaking of effecting a reconciliation between Papists and Protestants. But though these designs have been prosecuted with great zeal, and sometimes by men of acknowledged talents and piety, whose exertions have been backed by those who had great influence with the contending parties, they

have generally failed altogether, or led to no permanently good results ; and sometimes they have tended to inflame the quarrel, to place the parties at a greater distance from one another, and to create new confusions and divisions.

Sensible of these difficulties, and despairing of being able to remove them by the ordinary mode of conference, explanations, and discussion, many have come to adopt the opinion that there is but one way of putting an end to the divisions of the church ; that is, by abstracting totally the points of difference, consigning all the controversies which have arisen to oblivion, and bringing together the separate parties on the undebatable ground which is common to all. A remedy which would prove worse than the disease—an expedient which would lay the basis of union on the grave of all those valuable truths and institutions which have been involved in the disputes of different parties, and which constitute the firm and sacred bonds of ecclesiastical confederation and communion.

Is this desirable event, then, altogether hopeless ? Is it vain to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, or to make any attempts for its restoration ? Is there no balm by whose virtue, no physician by whose skill, the bleeding wounds of the church may be closed ? Every person who “loves the truth and peace” will reply, God forbid that this should be the case !

DISCOURSE II.

"They shall be ONE in mine hand."—EZEK. xxxvii. 19.

HAVING taken a view of the scriptural unity of the church, and of the nature and causes of those divisions by which it is broken, let us now turn our eye to a more agreeable and cheering prospect.

III. Of the Removal of the Divisions of the Church, and the Restoration of her violated Unity.

1. A happy reunion of the divided church is promised in the Word of God. It is implied in those promises which secure to the church the enjoyment of a high degree of prosperity in the latter days—in which God engages to arise and have mercy on Zion, to be favourable to his people, pardon their iniquity, and hear their prayers, cause their reproach to cease, and make them a praise, a glory, and a rejoicing, in all the earth; in one word, in which he promises to pour out his Holy Spirit and revive his work. God cannot be duly glorified, religion cannot triumph in the world, the church cannot be prosperous and happy, until her internal dissensions are abated, and her children come to act in greater unison and concert. But when her God vouchsafes to make the light of his countenance to shine upon her, and sheds down the enlightening, reviving, restorative and sanctifying influences of his Spirit, the long delayed, long wished-for day will not be far distant: it will have already dawned.

But there are, in the Bible, promises that bear directly on this part of the church's felicity, and pledge the divine faithfulness for the restoration of her lost peace and violated unity. Some of these I shall lay before you as grounds of your faith, and encouragements to your hopes and endeavours. I begin with the declaration of the evangelical prophet, which has been often re-echoed in the prayers of the friends of Zion, and which deserves your particular attention from its occupying a place in the midst of promises referring immediately to the times of the New Testament: "Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion."¹ The divisions and distractions of the church have, in every age, been greatly owing to the conduct of her overseers and guardians. If they "follow their own spirit," and see

¹ Isa. lii. 8.

a "lying divination," how can it be expected that they shall "go up into the gaps, to make up the hedge, or stand in the battle in the day of the Lord?"¹ If in giving forth instructions respecting sin and duty, danger and safety, their voices be dissonant and contradictory, must they not cause great distress and perplexity to their people, and prove, instead of messengers of peace, "the snare of a fowler in all their ways, and hatred in the house of their God?"² How cheering, then, the assurance that they "shall see eye to eye" in the matters of God, and lift up their united voice in "publishing salvation, and saying to Zion, Thy God reigneth!" To this may be added another passage from the same prophecy which bears an equally undoubted reference to the latter days, although clothed in Old Testament language: "He shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth. The envy also of Ephraim shall depart, and the enmity³ of Judah shall be cut off: Ephraim shall not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." Then, instead of waging an unnatural war, and forming ungodly alliances to enable them the more effectually to harass one another, they shall, with united strength, assail the avowed enemies of religion: "They shall fly upon the shoulders of the Philistines: they shall lay their hand upon Edom and Moab; and the children of Ammon shall obey them."⁴ The remark made as to the period referred to in the above predictions may be applied to the following, although some parts of the description relate more immediately to the deliverance from the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities: "At the same time, saith the Lord, will I be the God of ALL the families of Israel, and they shall be my people.—For there shall be a day, that the watchmen on the mount Ephraim shall cry, Arise ye, and let us go up to Zion unto the Lord our God."⁵—"Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them; and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth. And I will cause the captivity of Judah, and the captivity of Israel, to return, and will build them, as at the first."⁶ Suffice it to add these two evangelical promises: "Then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent."⁷ "It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord; I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before him.—And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be ONE Lord, and his name ONE."⁸

These, brethren, are "exceeding great and precious promises;" and do they not amply secure the attainment, in due time, of the blessing to

¹ Ezek. xiii. 3, 5, 6.

² Mic. vii. 4; Hos. ix. 8.

³ See Bishop Lowth's Note on the passage.

⁴ Isa. xi. 12, 13, 14.

⁵ Jer. xxxi. 1, 6.

⁶ Jer. xxxiii. 6, 7.

⁷ Zeph. iii. 9.

⁸ Zech. viii. 20—22; xiv. 9.

which they all so evidently refer? Yes: "these are the true sayings of God"—of Him who cannot lie, nor change nor call back his words. They are the sayings of Him "that frustrateth the tokens of the liars and maketh diviners mad; that turneth wise men backward, and maketh their knowledge foolish; that confirmeth the word of his servant, and performeth the counsel of his messengers."¹ They are "written for the generation to come, and the people that shall be created shall praise the Lord" for the fulfilment of them. Give him glory by placing your hope and confidence in his promises; and let the cheering prospect which they hold forth console and animate your hearts, amidst all the distress which you feel in contemplating the present disordered and divided state of the church. Are you still disposed to say, "How can these things be?" Do you find it difficult "against hope to believe in hope?" Consider what I have farther to say.

2. The removing of divisions, and the restoring of unity and peace to the church, is the work of God. What "the mouth of the Lord hath spoken," His hand will perform. He has not only predicted that the event shall happen, but He has promised to bring it to pass. He may employ men as "workers together with him," but He has not left the success to depend on their exertions, and with His own irresistible and all-powerful arm will He redeem the pledge which He has given by the interposition of His sacred and inviolable word: "I will take the stick of Joseph which is in the hand of Ephraim, and put it with the stick of Judah, and they shall be one in mine hand. I will make them one nation in the land."

God is the great pacificator and repairer of the breach. This is the name by which He is repeatedly called, and the truth of which He will evince, "The Lord God who gathereth the outcasts of Israel." The disorders which break out among Christians, and which destroy the unity and peace of the church, are, as we have seen, sure marks of His divine displeasure. Because they have moved Him to jealousy and provoked Him by their vanities, He permits the hot burning bolts of mutual jealousy and provocation to be thrown among them. It is impossible that the fire thus kindled can be extinguished—it will continue, in spite of all exertions, to "burn with a most vehement flame," until He is reconciled, and shall have pardoned their sins. "O God, thou hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased: O turn thyself to us again. Thou hast made the earth to tremble; thou hast broken it: heal the breaches thereof; for it shaketh."² When He has "taken away all his wrath, and turned himself from the fierceness of his anger," He will "speak peace to his people and to his saints;" He will smile success on those measures which He formerly blasted with His frown; and those who wept to see "the city of their solemnities" a scene of confusion and strife,

¹ Isa. xliv. 25, 26.

² Psal. lx. 1, 2.

shall behold it "a quiet habitation"—the city of peace. "He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock."¹

He will establish unity on the solid and immovable basis of immutable truth and eternal righteousness. This distinguishes the work of God from the coalitions formed by the wit and policy of men. They are often so intent and eager to reach the end, that they overlook and pass by the means proper for gaining it, and are ready to sacrifice truth and communion with God, for the sake of peace and fellowship with creatures. But his "eyes are on the truth," and he bears an invariable love to judgment and righteousness. The "prophets" of the church may be "light and treacherous" men, and "her priests" may do "violence to the law;" but "the just Lord is in the midst thereof; HE will not do iniquity: every morning doth he bring his judgment to light, he faileth not."²

And as He cannot, consistently with his moral perfections, do what is prejudicial to truth, or injurious to any of His laws and ordinances, so He is never reduced to the necessity of having recourse to methods which involve this, in order to fulfil His designs and promises. "Wonderful in counsel and excellent in working," He can devise and execute a plan for accomplishing the highest ends by the best and holiest means. Call to your minds the amazing plan, conceived by "wisdom dwelling with prudence," for reconciling the world to himself, and for repairing and closing up the wide and tremendous breach opened by the apostasy of man from his Maker. Survey this "wisdom of God in a mystery," as it is now unfolded by the Gospel. Consider the disposition of its parts, the perfect adaptation of the means to the end, and the nice adjustment of each of these means to the rest. See how it tends to vindicate the authority of the divine law, to assert the honour of the supreme lawgiver, and to stamp heaven's broadest, blackest brand of infamy on sin, at the same time that it provides a way of escape and salvation to the rebellious sinner. See those attributes of Deity, whose claims were apparently conflicting and irreconcilable, harmonising and conspiring together to promote the gracious design, reflecting lustre upon one another, mingling their rays and concentrating their lights, until at last they burst forth in one united blaze of glories more effulgent and overwhelming than is to be seen in all the other works of God. See "mercy and truth meeting together; righteousness and peace kissing each other; truth springing out of the earth, and righteousness looking down from heaven."³ Surely the God of Peace, who has displayed such "manifold wisdom" in restoring us to His favour by Christ Jesus, can be at no loss to reconcile His followers, and to terminate their minor differences, in such a way as shall be fully consistent with the claims of truth and holiness.

¹ Jer. xxxi. 10.

² Zeph. iii. 4, 5.

³ Psal. lxxxv. 10, 11.

3. God will bring about this happy event under the administration of his Son, and by the influences of his Spirit.

"I will make them one nation ;—and David my servant shall be king over them : and they all shall have one shepherd."¹ Christ is "the Prince of Peace ;" and "having made peace by the blood of his cross," it is fit that He should have the honour, and He is qualified for the task, of terminating all the variances which may arise among those whom He has reconciled to God. As the High Priest of our profession, His prayer for them that have believed on Him is, "That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ;" and when at any time, in their present imperfect state, they kindle the anger of God against them by their discontents and seditions, "he stands," like Aaron with his golden censer, "between the dead and the living ; and the plague is stayed."² As the King of the church He will confer this blessing on her. Though we do not yet see that "abundance of peace" which was predicted of His reign, we have the best grounds to believe, that, in the progress of His wise and righteous and beneficent administration, the ecclesiastical feuds which have prevailed among his followers, and even the political wars which have raged among the nations, will gradually subside, and issue in a state of peace, concord, and amity, which, though not so perfect and uninterrupted as some have sanguinely anticipated, has hitherto been unexampled in the world. "He shall speak peace unto the heathen."³ "He shall judge among many people, and rebuke strong nations afar off ; and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks : nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."⁴

He will accomplish this chiefly by the influences of his Spirit accompanying his word ;—enlightening, regenerating, humanising, purifying the hearts of men, and thus uniting them in love to Himself, and subjection to His laws. The conversions, the revivals, the reformatations, the unions, the enlargements of the church, are all ascribed in Scripture to this secret, irresistible, all-subduing agency. When God had begun to bestow on His people the blessings promised in our text and context, the prophet Zechariah was presented with the sight of a golden candlestick, having a bowl on its top, with seven lamps and seven pipes, and two olive trees which furnished the bowl with a constant supply of oil. And this is the explanation of the emblem, as given by the angelical interpreter who stood by it : "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."⁵ "The briars and thorns" of contention, and all the bitter fruits that have sprung from the old curse, will continue to "come up upon the land of God's people," "until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high."⁶ When, at His ascension, Christ shed down the Holy Spirit, and "the appearance of cloven

¹ Ezek. xxxvii. 22, 24.

² Num. xvi.

³ Zech. ix. 10.

⁴ Mic. iv. 3. Isa. ii. 4.

⁵ Zech. iv. 6.

⁶ Isa. xxxii. 13—15.

tongues, as of fire, sat on the disciples," the strangers who were collected heard each in his own language the wonderful works of God, and "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul." Nor is it to be expected, my brethren, that we shall emerge from our confusions, worse than those which invaded mankind in the plain of Shinar, or that we shall regain primitive unanimity, until we are blessed with a new and liberal effusion of the influences of that Spirit who descended on the day of Pentecost.

In order to our becoming again "one body," we must be "all baptised by one Spirit, and all made to drink into one Spirit."¹ It is "the unity of the Spirit" that we are to "endeavour to keep in the bond of peace." Without His gracious aid we shall not be able to regain it when lost : our counsels will be foolish and carnal, and our endeavours feeble and abortive. Without this, it will want the essential characters of a scriptural and godly union. Ought it to be a union in the truth? He is "the Spirit of truth," and it is His work to "lead unto all truth." Ought it to be holy? He is "the Spirit of holiness." In fine, it is He who produces and cherishes all those dispositions by which Christian union is cemented, and who counteracts all those principles which tend to its dissolution : "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. If we live in the Spirit," we shall "not be desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another."²

4. God prepares the way for union by reformation, and the revival of real religion. Abuses, and a course of corrupt administration, in a civil state, excite discontent and sedition, and sometimes lead to open rebellion and anarchy. The corruption of the word and ordinances of God is one great cause of divisions and offences in the church. The only way of effectually curing the evil is to remove the cause. Hence, the false prophets are severely reprov'd for "healing the hurt" of God's ancient people "slightly," and promising peace to them, while they remained impenitent and unreformed. When a wicked king asked, "Is it peace?" the only reply which he could obtain was, "What hast thou to do with peace?—what peace, so long as the whoredoms of thy mother Jezebel, and her witchcrafts are so many?"³ If religious societies are in a corrupt or declining state, their conjunction could only tend to aggravate their corruption and accelerate their decline.

When God intends to restore unity to His church, He begins with reforming her, and removing those evils which are offensive to Himself, and to His faithful people. He gives commandment to "cast up, to prepare the way, to take up the stumbling-block out of the way of his people."⁴ He, as "the Breaker, goes up before them." He enters His house, and His eyes, as a flame of fire, survey every apartment and every corner in it : He sees what is wanting and needs to be supplied and set in order, as well as what is superfluous and ought to be removed—all

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 13. ² Gal. v. 22—26. ³ 2 Kings, ix. 19, 22. ⁴ Isa. lvii. 14 ; lxii. 10.

error, will-worship, prostitution of sacred things, tyranny, disorder. He ascends His judgment-seat, fences His great court of inquest and review, calls His servants before Him, and institutes an inquiry into their conduct; reproving their mismanagement, reversing their unjust sentences, correcting every abuse, redressing every wrong, and deciding impartially and finally every quarrel and controversy that may have arisen among the members of His household. This judicial process is often very severe—to many it may prove ruinous and destructive; but to His church its issue is most beneficial and salutary. “Who may abide the day of his coming? or, who shall stand when he appeareth? He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he shall purify the sons of Levi, that they may offer a pure offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years.”¹

Examine those promises which hold forth the prospect of reunion to the church: you will find this in every instance associated with her reformation. Does God promise, “they shall all serve me with one consent?” This is the fruit of a previous promise, “I will turn to the people a PURE language.” Does He say, “I will give them one heart?” He will do so, when “they shall take away all the detestable things and all the abominations from thence.”² Does He say that “Israel shall be the third with Egypt and Assyria?” It is in the way of these two heathen nations being made to “speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of hosts;” that is, profess the true religion, and devote themselves to the service of God.³ I ask your attention particularly to the predictions of the event immediately referred to in our text. The following declaration summarily announces the divine plan: “Thus saith the Lord; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from all your iniquities, I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the waste places shall be built.”⁴ How this purification shall be effected is declared in these words: “I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean;—a new heart also will I give you, and I will put my Spirit within you.”⁵ The permanent effects of this reformation are predicted in a verse subsequent to the text: “Neither shall they defile themselves any more with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions; but I will save them out of all their dwelling-places, wherein they have sinned, and will cleanse them; so shall they be my people, and I will be their God.”⁶ The process is described in different language, but of the same import, in a preceding part of the prophecy: “I will cause you to pass under the (tithing) rod,⁷ and I will bring you into the bond of the covenant; and I will

¹ Mal. iii. 2—4.

² Ezek. xi. 18, 21.

³ Isa. xix. 18, 21, 24.

⁴ Ezek. xxxvi. 33.

⁵ Ib. ver. 25—27.

⁶ Ib. xxxvii. 23.

⁷ This is, I believe, commonly understood of the rod of correction: I am inclined to think that the allusion is to the rod of the

tithing master. Lev. xxvii. 32. The following is, in my opinion, the meaning of the passage. The persons more immediately referred to are those Jews, who before the final destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, had fled and taken refuge in

purge out from among you the rebels, and them that transgress against me—they shall not enter into the land of Israel.” When this has been executed : “In mine holy mountain, in the mountain of the height of Israel, there shall all the house of Israel, ALL OF THEM in the land, serve me ; there will I accept them.”¹ It shall be as of old, “The tenth part shall be holy to the Lord.” Sometimes, indeed, the process of refinement is not carried so far, and the residue is reduced only to a third. “It shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die ; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried : They shall call on my name, and I will hear them : I will say, It is my people ; and they shall say, The Lord is my God.”²

Run over the page of the church’s history, and you will find the facts corresponding to the language of prophecy : her unions have been preceded by reformations. This was the case in the days of Hezekiah. That pious and reforming monarch not only removed the monuments of idolatry, but also “brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made,” because “the children of Israel did burn incense to it :”³ he opened the house of the Lord, and excited the priests and Levites to sanctify it, to offer the burnt-offering upon the altar, and to celebrate the praises of God, “according to the commandment of David, and of Gad the King’s seer, and of Nathan the prophet.” After this he sent “posts with letters through all Israel and Judah,” inviting the people of both kingdoms to turn again to the Lord, enter into his sanctuary, and keep the solemn passover which he had indicted. The following is the account of his success : “Divers of Asher and Manassch and of Zebulon humbled themselves, and came to Jerusalem. Also in Judah the hand of God was to give them one heart to do the commandment of the king and of the princes, by the word of the Lord. So there was great joy in Jerusalem ; for since the time of Solomon the son of David king of Israel there was not the like in Jerusalem.”⁴—This was the case also at the return from Babylon, when the schism between Judah

Phœnicia, and other countries bordering upon Judea, who flattered themselves that they should soon be able to return to their own land, though they still cherished their idolatrous inclinations, and who had sent their elders to Ezekiel, to obtain, if possible, a response from God favourable to their wishes. (Ver. 1 ; comp. chap. xiv. 1—4). The prophet is directed to inform them that what “cometh into their mind shall not be at all”—that they shall be forced out of the countries where they now reside, and brought into “the wilderness of the people” (Chaldea), and there God will plead His controversy with them, as He had done with their fathers “in the wilderness of the land of Egypt,” or into which they came after being brought out of Egypt. (Ver 33—36). More particularly, He will “cause them to pass under the (tithing) rod,” setting aside

a tenth part of them for himself, and for this part He will “remember his covenant in the days of their youth, and establish unto them an everlasting covenant.” (Chap. xvi. 60—63). The nine parts He will treat as He had treated the bulk of the generation that came out of Egypt : He will “purge them out as rebels”—they shall not “enter into the land of Israel,” but may “go serve every one his idols,” where he chooses. (Verses 38, 39). But the tenth part, which remains after “the rebels and transgressors have been purged out from among them,” shall be restored to Judea, and “all of them in the land” shall serve God acceptably, and He will be sanctified in them before the heathen.” (Ver. 40—44).

¹ Ezek. xx. 35—40.

² Zech. xiii. 8, 9.

³ 2 Kings, xviii. 4.

⁴ 2 Chron. xxx. 11, 12, 26.

and Israel was about to be completely cured. They were both cured of their disposition to idolatry ; “ the altar was set upon his bases ; ” the temple built “ after the manner thereof ; ” and “ whatsoever was commanded by the God of heaven diligently done for the house of the God of heaven.”¹—It was at a period emphatically called “ the time of reformation,” that Jew and Greek, Barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, were made one, after the labours of the greatest of all reformers as well as peacemakers, and of His forerunner, of whom it was said : “ Many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God. And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just ; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”²—Subsequently there have been times of reformation in the church, and especially in our land, which were accompanied by a happy and uncommon spirit of unanimity and conjunction among the friends of religion. And to those measures which once and again put a premature stop to the progress of religious reform in England, and which at one time overturned, and afterwards defaced and marred, a more perfect reformation attained in Scotland, must we principally attribute those ecclesiastical divisions and feuds which have arisen at different periods, and still prevail in both countries.

The ways and thoughts of the Almighty are very different from ours. We seek great things : He seeks those which are good. We look on the outward appearance of a cause or a measure : He looks into the heart of it. We “ despise the day of small things,” and nothing will satisfy us but an attempt upon a great scale : He, on the contrary, delights in a work which is in its “ beginning small ; ” in its progress, gradual, noiseless, and often imperceptible ; but in “ its latter end doth greatly increase.” We would unite large masses, and afterwards set about reforming them : His plan is the reverse. “ Turn, O backsliding children, and I will take you one of a city, and two of a family, and I will bring you to Zion : and I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding. And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land—they shall call Jerusalem the throne of the Lord ; and all nations shall be gathered unto it, to the name of the Lord.”³

5. God sometimes facilitates and prepares the way for union by removing the occasions of offence and division. In righteous judgment He permits stumblingblocks to fall in the way of professors of religion, which he afterwards mercifully removes. As long as the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel subsisted, they were rivals, and policy concurred with a passion for idolatry in keeping up their religious dissensions. In overturning the kingdom of Israel by the Assyrians, He whose views are not limited to the accomplishment of a single end, intended not only to punish that people for their defection from His worship, but also to

¹ Ezra, *passim*.

² Luke, i. 16, 17.

³ Jer. iii. 14—17.

prepare the way for their coalescing with Judah into one holy society. "Yet a little while," says He, "and I will cause to cease the kingdom of the house of Israel. Then shall the children of Judah and the children of Israel be gathered together, and appoint themselves one head, and they shall come up out of the land."¹ Even the kingdom of Judah behoved to be dissolved, that every obstruction might be removed out of the way; and that "the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem might not magnify themselves" over their brethren. A long and violent quarrel had subsisted between the Jews and Samaritans, which turned chiefly on the question whether Jerusalem or Mount Gerizzim was the divinely appointed place of sacred service. The Jews were in the right on the merits of this question, though they allowed their zeal to carry them to a vicious extreme, in not only refusing to symbolise with a corrupt worship, but in also declining to have any civil or friendly dealings with the Samaritans. This was our Saviour's judgment; and yet he intimated to the woman of Samaria, that God was about to put an end to the dispute in a way which neither of the contending parties looked for. "Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers of the Father shall worship him in spirit and in truth."² It pleased God, who "made peace by the blood of the cross," at the same time to reconcile Jews and Gentiles, and to abolish the ceremonial law, which was a wall of partition between them, that they might become one holy family. Though the virtual abrogation of this law by the death of Christ set the consciences of Christians free from its observance, their union was not yet complete; the temporary regulations made by divine direction for preserving communion between Jews and Gentiles, though they allayed, did not put an end to all offences and divisions arising from this quarter; and therefore God provided for the consolidation of the union by destroying the temple, and thus rendering the peculiar service connected with it physically impossible.

Instances of the same kind, or at least analogous, might be pointed out in the subsequent history of the church. Dissensions, which had arisen among the early Christians during the severe and numerous persecutions which they suffered, were terminated on the overthrow of pagan Rome. The law known by the name of the *Interim*, enacted in Germany soon after the Reformation, was not only the cause of much suffering, but also of violent disputes and great disunion among Protestants; while some of them pleaded the lawfulness of complying with its regulations, and others, more firm and consistent, condemned this as a sinful conformity. Of the same kind, during the last and sorest persecution in this country, were the disputes among Presbyterians, excited

¹ Hos. i. 4, 11.

² John, iv. 21—23.

by the various ensnaring oaths and tests imposed by government ; and the indulgences and tolerations which flowed from an Erastian supremacy, were clogged with sinful conditions, and intended to pave the way for the establishment of Popery and arbitrary power. All of these were abolished at the Revolution. I do not mean to say that the simple abolition of these or similar impositions will in itself heal the divisions which they had occasioned, or, that it is a sufficient or proper reason for the immediate restoration of interrupted communion and harmony. As no external circumstance ought to mar the unity and peace of the church, nor can it have this effect without the intervention of human imperfection and sin, so no change of external circumstances can restore what was lost without the co-operation of the grace of God, inclining the hearts of the parties to their duty and to one another. All that is meant is, that this is one of the means which Providence is sometimes pleased to employ and bless ; and that by removing temptations on the one hand, and occasions of offence on the other, it has a tendency to facilitate arrangements for peace, in which a regard to faithfulness and the public interests of religion is combined with a due respect to the convictions of brethren, and an enlightened consideration of the circumstances in which they may have been placed. I cannot help viewing the present non-imposition of that oath, which at first occasioned a breach in the Secession body, as a dispensation of this kind, and which admits of being improved in the way just mentioned ; provided the parties concerned were cordially attached to the common cause espoused by their fathers, and at one as to the great ends and objects of their original association.

6. God prepares the way for union in his church by causing the divided parties to participate of the same afflictions and deliverances. Having described the judgments inflicted on the kingdom of the ten tribes, God says to Judah : "Thou shalt drink of thy sister's cup deep and large : thou shalt be filled with drunkenness and sorrow, with the cup of thy sister Samaria."¹ Both the punishment and the deliverance of Israel and Judah are often spoken of by the prophets as one ; and as intended equally for their reformation and reunion. "By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged ; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall beat along² the channel of the river unto the stream of Egypt, and ye shall be gathered one by one, O ye children of Israel."³

Providence blesses their communion in suffering, to fit them for communion in love and holy living. How can fellow-sufferers but have a fellow-feeling for one another ?⁴ Having drunk of the same cup of suffering, must they not desire to drink of the same cup of blessing and thanksgiving ? The process by which they are refined also prepares

¹ Ezek. xxiii. 32, 38.

² A metaphor borrowed from the practice of hunters, who beat the bushes along the banks of rivers to rouse and dislodge the

wild beasts which took refuge there. Hence the phrase, *Excutere cubilibus feras*.

³ Isa. xxvii. 9, 12. See also Jer. 1, 17—20, 33.

⁴ 2 Cor. i. 7 ; 1 Thess. ii. 14.

them for uniting, by consuming or separating the dross and tin and clay of corruption which kept them asunder. "Put many pieces of metal together into the furnace, and when they are melted, they will run together," says a pious writer.¹ When the Hebrews in Egypt smote and strove with one another, and spurned the mediatory offices of Moses, who "would have set them at one again," it was a proof that the time of their deliverance was not yet come, and that they needed to be kept longer in the iron furnace. It was when the sons of Jacob were suspected as spies in Egypt, and harshly treated, and thrown into prison, that they remembered their treatment of Joseph with whom they had dealt cruelly as a spy on their conduct, and feelingly expressed their compunction in the presence of their offended but forgiving and tender-hearted brother. Bishops Hooper and Ridley had a warm contest in the reign of Edward VI., but when, in the time of the bloody Mary, they were thrown into the same prison, and had the prospect of being brought to the same stake, they lovingly embraced, and Ridley readily professed his contempt for that ceremony which, with intolerant eagerness, he had imposed on his reluctant brother. The affair of the Public Resolutions, during the Second Reformation in Scotland, caused a very hurtful schism in the Presbyterian church, and those who protested against the measure had church censures inflicted on them by the ruling majority; but after the Restoration, when the religion and liberties of the nation were overturned, and the arm of persecution was stretched out against both parties, some of the leading promoters of the Resolutions had their eyes opened, and candidly confessed that their protesting brethren had acted a wiser and more upright part than themselves,—a confession honourable to faithfulness, and a thousand times more creditable to the persons who made it, than if they had stood stiffly to the defence of their conduct after the event had shown its faultiness, or if, covering self-love with the cloak of forbearance, they had insisted on consigning the affair to silence and oblivion.

When God grants a common deliverance to those who were exposed to similar sufferings and dangers, he throws around their hearts "the cords of love," and draws them together as with "the bands of a man." The powers of hell and earth combined could not have severed the three young captives, after they came up from the burning fiery furnace, linked together in chains of a very different kind from those which the flames had recently consumed. "Lovely and pleasant in their lives," what a spectacle must they have afforded, "in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation among whom they walked as lights!" In the field of modern church history, I do not know a spot on which the mind rests with a more pleasing emotion, than that which describes the deputation sent by the Waldenses of Bohemia to congratulate and establish concord with the first reformers of Germany and Switzerland; the candour with which that interesting and simple body of Christian con-

¹ Henry, on Ezekiel xxxvii. 21.

fessors stated the faith and religious practice which they had so long retained and held fast in the jaws of persecution ; and the ingenuous and meek spirit with which they received the advice and admonitions of their more enlightened brethren. The Harmony of Confessions in the Protestant churches, and their mutual correspondence and co-operation, evince the unanimity and goodwill by which they were actuated at the era of the Reformation from Popery. It is true that a dispute early arose between some of the leading reformers, which was managed with unbecoming violence and obstinacy by at least one of the parties ; but it was confined to a single article, and did not lead to an irreparable breach, until after their death, when there had arisen a generation which knew not the mighty works which the Lord had done in rescuing their fathers from Antichristian darkness and bondage. I need not dwell on the effect which emancipation from a popish and hierarchical yoke had, at different periods, in uniting the friends of religion and reformation in our native land, and in exciting them to seek the extension of this "blessed union and conjunction" to other Christian churches. It were presumptuous to limit divine sovereignty, or to prescribe an invariable mode of action to the Almighty and All-wise ; but brethren, as often as I reflect on these things, and survey the present state of the church of Christ, the thought still recurs forcibly to my mind, Surely we must be made to pass through some fiery trial before we shall be refined from those corruptions which have defaced the beauty and eaten out the power of religion, and before we shall be fitted for becoming "one in the hand of the Lord."

Lastly, In healing the divisions of the church, God has cemented and consecrated the parties by disposing them to give the most solemn pledges of their fidelity to Himself, and to one another. It was predicted that the return from the captivity and the conjunction of Judah and Israel should be distinguished by such exercises. "In those days, and in that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping : they shall go, and seek the Lord their God. They shall ask the way to Zion, with their faces thitherward, saying, Come, and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."¹ How exactly the event corresponded to the prophecy, you may see by consulting the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Public vows and religious covenants formed no part of Jewish peculiarity. They did not belong to the ceremonial law ; and it would be something worse than an absurdity to describe them as oaths of allegiance to Jehovah, as the political head of the nation of Israel. They are not more unsuitable to the character of the Christian church than they were to that of the Jewish. Accordingly it is expressly foretold in many prophecies, that such solemn exercises shall take place in New Testament times.² These predictions have been verified and

¹ Jer. l. 4, 5.

² Isa. xix. 18, 21 ; xlv. 3—5 ; xlv. 23 ; Jer. iv. 2, Zech. ii. 11 ; xiii. 9.

fulfilled at different periods and in different countries. And in none have they been more eminently fulfilled than in our own land, especially in times of reformation and union. When peace has been restored between contending nations, it is common for them to renew their former compacts of amity, and to repeat the solemnities by which they were originally ratified. What more seasonable for those who have long been divided by their own sins and the divine anger, than to humble themselves before God, and to ask of Him a right way? And what more fitted for expressing their gratitude and cementing their union, than a joint dedication of themselves to God, accompanied with solemn pledges of mutual fidelity?

I shall now state some inferences from the doctrine that has been laid down.

1. You may see from this subject the extensive and permanent utility of Old Testament Scripture. Not only was it "given by inspiration of God," but it still "is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."¹ Its utility is not limited to those parts which contain prophecies relating to the New Testament, or which afford us instruction by means of types and figures. It abounds with direct information respecting the great truths of religion, the worship of God, and the exercises and experiences, the conflicts and comforts, of a holy and godly life. It conveys important instruction concerning the divine dispensations to individuals, nations, and the church, and concerning the duties which men owe to God and to one another, in their individual or collective capacity, and in their different stations and relations, natural, civil or ecclesiastical. The permanent authority and usefulness of the Scriptures of the Old Testament rest on such principles as these: that the Author of both great divisions of the Bible is one and the same; that He has in all ages governed the world of mankind by moral laws, as well as ruled over a peculiar people; and that true religion, and the church of God professing it, have ever been substantially the same under subordinate varieties of external dispensation. Even those parts of the inspired record which refer to the Jewish, admit of an application to the Christian economy, in the way of *analogy*—by setting aside whatever was peculiar to the former and seizing on the points of agreement or resemblance between the two economies, and on those principles and grounds which are common to both. This is a key to the Old Testament which appears to be much neglected, and whose value has not been sufficiently appreciated: although our Saviour and his apostles have set us examples of its use and importance.²

Erroneous, mistaken, or defective notions on this subject are very injurious to the unity and peace of the church. They are common in

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

² Matt. xii. 3—8; 1 Cor. ix. 8—14; x. 1—11, 17—22; James v. 16—18; with many other places.

the present time ; have given rise to "diverse and strange doctrines," and an endless variety of novel opinions ; have produced distorted and partial views of morality ; have sapped the foundation, and impaired the evidence of many religious institutions ; and, under the name of Christianity, have led to the adoption of a faith and practice not only different from, but, in its genius and spirit, opposite to that religion which God revealed from the beginning, and which was professed and followed by the fearers of His name for four thousand years. Many who maintain the divine origin and inspiration of this part of the sacred volume, show a disposition unduly to abridge that authority which they acknowledge in general, while they resist, as impertinent and inconclusive, every argument brought from it, unless it is supported and confirmed by the writings of the New Testament. The principles, communion, and practice of Christians must necessarily be defective and wrong, when they are formed and regulated, not by the whole, but a part only of the perfect and divinely authorised standard. How can it be expected that parties will come to one, if they are not agreed on what constitutes the supreme judge of all their controversies, and the infallible canon by which they are bound to walk together ?

2. We may hence see what constitutes the evil of schism, and wherein this differs from warrantable separation. Though all parties nearly agree in the general notion of schism, yet, when they come to explain and apply it, they are found to differ very widely in their opinions. Few subjects have been involved in greater obscurity, and have given occasion to such opposite charges and severe recriminations. Some, both in ancient and modern times, have described it in the most exaggerated colours, and represented it as the most heinous of all sins. Papists have grossly perverted the meaning of the word, and made it, along with heresy, a constant topic of declamation and unjust reproach against all who have left their communion ; and in this part of their conduct they have been followed by the warm admirers, and indiscriminating advocates of some national churches among Protestants.¹ Others have erred on the opposite extreme, have extenuated its evil, and narrowed the Scripture meaning of the term, by confining it to one kind or branch of it, and excluding or overlooking all others. The original word in the New Testament translated schism or division, signifies any rent or breach, by which that which was formerly one is divided ; and when applied to the church, it is always used in a bad sense. Christians are reprehended for giving way to schism, and exhorted to avoid those who cause it. It is a relative term, and cannot be understood without just views of that unity and communion of which it is a violation.

Schism does not consist, as some have preposterously maintained, in

¹ In their declamations against schism, such expressions as the following have been used by Protestant writers (let them be nameless): "An offence so grievous that nothing so much incenses God : No reforma-

tion can be so important as the sin of schism is pernicious : No multitude of good works, no moral honesty of life, no cruel death, endured even for the faith, can excuse any who are guilty of it from damnation."

separation from the church, considered as invisible. It is not to be restricted to separation from the catholic body, or whole community of Christians ; as if none could be justly chargeable with this sin, for withdrawing from the communion of particular churches. It is often displayed in fomenting factions within a church, and accompanied with an uncharitable, bitter, or turbulent spirit : but there is no good reason for confining it to one or both of these ; and neither the proper meaning of the word nor the scriptural use of it, supports the favourite opinion of some modern critics and divines, that “ no person who, in the spirit of candour and charity, adheres to that which to the best of his judgment is right, though in his opinion he should be mistaken, is, in the scriptural sense, either schismatic or heretic.”¹ Dishonesty and uncharitableness are not essential qualities either of heresy or schism, but aggravations which are sometimes found cleaving to them.

On the other hand, schism and separation are not convertible terms, nor are the things signified by them necessarily of the same kind. Schism is always evil ; separation may be either good or evil, according to circumstances. To constitute the former, there must be a violation of some of the scriptural bonds of unity in the body of Christ. It presupposes a church formed and constituted by the authority and according to the laws of Christ, and an administration corresponding to the nature, character, and design of such a society, at least so far as that persons may belong to it without sin, and hold communion with it consistently with that regard which they owe to their spiritual safety and edification. The Christian church is not an arbitrary institution of men—not a mere voluntary association of any number of people, for any purpose, and on any terms, which to them may seem good ; nor has its communion been left vague and undetermined by the laws of its founder. It is not schism to refuse submission to human constitutions, though they may be called churches, and may have religion some way for their object, nor to refuse conformity to such terms as men may be pleased to impose without warrant from the Word of God ; whether these constitutions and terms proceed from the lust of power, or from the pride of wisdom, and whether they be intended to forward the policy of statesmen, to feed the ambition of churchmen, or to flatter the humours of the populace.

That churches once pure and faithful may degenerate so far, and fall into such a state as will warrant separation from them, is evident from the injunctions and examples of Scripture, and from facts compared with the nature and ends of religious fellowship. Nor can this be denied by any consistent Protestant. To “ cleave to the Lord,” to cultivate fellowship with Him in the way He has prescribed, and to “ follow him whithersoever he goeth,” constitute the primary object to be kept

¹ Dr Campbell's Dissertation on Heresy and Schism ; prefixed to his New Translation of the Gospels. Some of the positions in that dissertation, indefensible, in my opinion, on the principles either of sound criticism or sound divinity, have been admitted with surprising facility in this country.

in view by Christians : to this, fellowship with men is secondary and subordinate ; and we are bound to forego and relinquish the latter, whenever it is found incompatible with the former. We are exhorted to "follow peace with all men," not absolutely, but so far only as it is consistent with "holiness," and may be lawfully practicable. No particular church has any promise securing her continuance in the faith and in purity of communion ; and, consequently, none can have a right to claim a perpetual or inviolable union with her, or to denounce persons schismatics simply on the ground of their withdrawing from her pale and declining her authority.

Separation may be either negative or positive. A negative separation consists in withdrawing from wonted communion with a church, either in the way of not participating with her in some ordinances, on the ground of corruptions attaching to them, or in the way of suspending all public communion with her. A positive separation consists in the formation of another church, and the holding of other assemblies, in contradistinction from those with which we were formerly connected. In all ordinary cases the former ought to precede the latter ; as it is our duty to try every means for removing evils before adopting the last resource. But when the prospect of recovering our Christian privileges, consistently with our duty to God, may be distant and doubtful, when many may be placed in the same situation with ourselves, and when the public interests of religion are involved in the matter of our grievances, the same reasons which warranted a negative separation will, by their continuance, warrant that which is positive ; for none are at liberty to live without public ordinances when they have access to enjoy them. I need scarcely add, that if in providence we can find a church already constituted to which we can conscientiously accede, regard to the communion of saints, and aversion to unnecessary division, ought to induce us to prefer this course to the formation of a new society.

I do not mean to determine the delicate question, how far or how long communion may be maintained with corrupt churches, nor to state the causes which may render separation from them lawful and necessary. The decision of such questions must always depend much on the state of particular facts and actual circumstances occurring at the time. Some general points are almost universally conceded, such as, that it is warrantable to separate from a church which obstinately maintains gross and destructive errors, or is chargeable with idolatry, or adulterates the ordinances of Christ, or exercises a tyrannical authority over the souls of men, or has established sinful terms of communion, or whose fellowship we cannot enjoy without being involved in sin, and living in the neglect of some necessary duty. When a church once reformed and faithful not only departs from what she had professed and received, and persists in this by a series of public acts, but also restrains all due freedom in testifying against her defection ; or when she adopts doctrines inconsistent with her former scriptural profession and engage-

ments, and imposes these by the perverted exercise of authority and discipline,—separation from her communion is lawful. When the public profession and administrations of a church have been settled conformably to the laws of Christ, and sanctioned by the most solemn engagements, if the majority shall set these aside, and erect a new constitution sinfully defective, and involving a material renunciation of the former, the minority refusing to accede to this, adhering to their engagements, and continuing to maintain communion on the original terms, cannot justly be charged with schism.

But while the lawfulness and duty of separation in certain cases is to be asserted and vindicated, we must not overlook the evil of schism, nor forget to warn you against unwarrantable or rash separations. It cannot admit of a doubt, that in the present time there is a strong tendency in the minds of many to run to this extreme ; and to this they are inclined in no small degree by the incorrect and loose notions which they entertain on the subject. Many can assign no grounds for their leaving the communion of a church which will stand the test of Scripture or reason. They are actuated by mere arbitrary will or obstinate humour, by selfishness or unsociability of disposition, by capriciousness or levity of spirit, and by dislikes which they cannot explain to others and perhaps cannot account for to themselves. Others are influenced by indifference to the benefit of religious fellowship, weariness of the offices and duties connected with it, love of carnal liberty, aversion to some of the doctrines or institutions of Christ, and impatience of faithful admonitions and the due exercise of church discipline. Others, who show a regard for divine ordinances, and profess a concern to preserve their purity, may relinquish the fellowship of a church from personal offences and grudges, from pride, envy, or disappointed ambition, or on account of debates and differences which have no immediate relation to the terms of ecclesiastical communion. A church which has received the doctrines of Christ, and in which the office-bearers and ordinances instituted by Him, and all the privileges conducive to salvation, may be enjoyed, may nevertheless be chargeable with various defects and evils. I think myself warranted by Scripture, and supported by the sentiments of the soundest divines who have treated this subject, when I state, that separation from such a church cannot be vindicated when it proceeds on such grounds as the following : Personal offences given by the misconduct of individual church members ; wrong decisions in personal causes or particular acts of maladministration, when they are not of lasting injury to the whole body ; differences of opinion among the members of a church about matters that cannot be shown to be positively determined in the Word of God, and have not been received into the public profession of that church ; diversity of practice in some points of mere external order, or in prudential regulations as to the form of divine worship ; the venting of errors by particular teachers, while the instances of this are infrequent, and not openly countenanced

by authority in the church, and the relaxation of discipline by admitting improper persons into communion in particular cases, or by not duly censuring those who are guilty of scandals, provided the ordinances themselves are retained in purity, the rules of discipline are not set aside, and there is access to have grievances on this head heard and redressed in due time : in fine, irregularities or abuses of different kinds in a church which is panting after reformation, endeavouring to free herself from restraints and hindrances that prevent her attaining it, and disposed to allow the use of those means which tend to further this desirable object.

3. We may hence see ground for lamentation on account of the dissensions and divisions which at present abound in the church of Christ. When, of old, one tribe in Israel was divided from the rest, or was prevented by intestine dissensions from "coming to the help of the Lord against the mighty," it was matter of deep distress and bitter regret to every lover of religion and the public welfare. "For the divisions of Reuben there were great thoughts of heart :—For the divisions of Reuben there were great searchings of heart."¹ And, surely, we ought to be affected in the same way in contemplating the dissensions of the Christian commonwealth, and of the particular provinces and sections of which it is composed. It is true, that, in the complex and extensive arrangements of divine Providence, they are necessary ; and they will be overruled for the production of ultimate and superabundant good. But this does not prove that they are not evil in themselves, nor that they may not be productive of manifold and great evils during a long series of years. It is also true, that they have prevailed in every age, and that the Church was not altogether free from them when she appeared in virgin purity and with angelical power on her head. The presence of inspired apostles, and the possession of miraculous gifts, did not prevent division ; nay, these gifts became the occasions of fomenting the evil, and by their abuse the members of the church were "puffed up one against another." But at no former period, and in no other country, has division prevailed to such an extent, as it does at present in our own land, which exhibits a countless variety of religious persuasions, and groans under endless divisions and subdivisions of parties. We have societies maintaining contradictory sentiments on almost every article of faith that can be named, and pursuing opposite practices respecting every institution of religion and every form of its celebration. Nor are the members of these societies in many instances more united among themselves than the different parties are with one another. Every one hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Such a wanton use have we made of our liberty as to have almost brought the very name into disgrace, and to tempt men to think that there is no certainty in religion. Scotland was long distinguished for her religious unity, as well as purity. But,

¹ Judg. v. 15, 16.

alas ! it is to be lamented that, in both respects, there is reason for saying, "The glory is departed !" First the staff of Beauty, and afterwards that of Bands, has been broken in our land. We are now as much disunited as our neighbours ; sects have multiplied among us ; and those who were most firmly united, and under the highest obligations to abide by a common profession, once solemnly embraced by the whole nation, have been divided and sore broken in judgment.

Whether we consider the causes or the consequences of our divisions, they call loudly for mourning. What reason have we to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, whose displeasure they so strongly indicate ! to inquire, "what meaneth the heat of this great anger ?" to smite on our breast and say, each for himself, "what have I done" to kindle or to keep alive the flame ? What a humiliating spectacle of human weakness and depravity to see Religion, which is calculated to unite men together "even as with a band of iron and brass," and Christianity, which breathes nothing but "peace and goodwill," and the Bible, expressly given by God as a common rule of faith and manners, become the occasion of so much division and discord and strife in the world ! What matter of triumph to the infidel and the idolater ! What cause of stumbling and offence to the weak and doubting Christian ! How much has it contributed to mar the influence of the Gospel at home, and to obstruct the propagation of it abroad, or to weaken the efforts that are made for this purpose ! But I refrain from a theme which has been copiously treated by many pious and eloquent writers.

Some, perhaps, may see no reason for such deplorations. They rejoice in the mitigation of that spirit of keenness and asperity with which religious disputes were formerly carried on, and anticipate the happiest results from the associations which have lately been formed among Christians of almost all denominations. But a little consideration may serve to lower the exultation which these facts are calculated at first view to raise. The general object of some of these societies, and the distant field of exertion chosen by others, remind us of our existing differences. Under the combinations, too, which have been forming, a process of decomposition has been secretly going on in the minds of Christians, by which their attachment to various articles of the faith has been loosened. A vague and indefinite evangelism, mixed with seriousness, into which it is the prevailing disposition of the present age to resolve all Christianity, will, in the natural progress of human sentiment, degenerate into an unsubstantial and incoherent pietism, which, after effervescing in enthusiasm, will finally settle into indifference ; in which case, the spirit of infidelity and irreligion, which is at present working and spreading to a more alarming extent than many seem to imagine, will achieve an easy conquest over a feeble and exhausted and nerveless adversary. "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith in the earth ?" Let wise men judge whether these forebodings are fanciful.

4. The danger of latitudinarian schemes of union and fellowship. Mournful as the divisions of the church are, and anxious as all its genuine friends must be to see them cured, it is their duty to examine carefully the plans which may be proposed for attaining this desirable end. We must not do evil that good may come ; and there are sacrifices too costly to be made for the procuring of peace with fellow Christians. Is it necessary to remind you, that unity and peace are not always good, nor a sure and infallible mark of a true and pure church ? We know that there is a church which has long boasted of her catholic unity notwithstanding all the corruptions which pollute her communion ; and that within her pale the whole world called Christian once enjoyed a profound repose, and it could be said, " Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language." It was a union and peace founded in ignorance, delusion, implicit faith, and a base subjection to human authority ; and supported by the arts of compulsion and terror. But there are other methods by which Christians may be deceived, and the interests of religion deeply injured, under the pretext or with the view of uniting its friends. Among these I know none more imposing, nor from which greater danger is to be apprehended in the present time, than that which proceeds on the scheme of principles usually styled latitudinarian.

It has obtained this name because it proclaims an undue latitude in matters of religion, which persons may take to themselves or give to others. Its abettors make light of the differences which subsist among religious parties, and propose to unite them on the common principles on which they are already agreed, in the way of burying the rest in silence, or of stipulating mutual forbearance and charity with respect to everything about which they may differ in opinion or in practice. Some plead for this on the ground that the several professions of religion differ very little from one another, and are all conducive to the happiness of mankind and the honour of God, who is pleased with the various and diversified modes in which men profess their regard to him, provided only they are sincere in their professions ; a principle of difformity, which, however congenial to the system of polytheism, is utterly eversive of a religion founded on the unity of the divine nature and will, and on a revelation which teaches us what we are to believe concerning God, and what duty He requires of us. But the ground on which this plan is ordinarily made to rest is a distinction made among the articles of religion. Some of these are called essential, or fundamental, or necessary, or principal ; others circumstantial, or non-fundamental, or unnecessary, or less important. The former, it is pleaded, are embraced by all true Christians ; the latter form the subjects of difference among them, and ought not to enter into the terms of ecclesiastical fellowship.¹ On this principle some of them would conciliate and unite all the Christian denominations, not excepting Papists, Arians,

¹ The distinction is variously expressed. Some modern writers on the subject of com- munism adhere to the distinction between what is essential or not essential to salva-

and Socinians ; while others restrict their plan to those called evangelical, who differ mainly in their views and practice as to the worship, order, and discipline of the church.

The distinction on which this scheme rests, is itself liable to objections which appear insuperable. It is not warranted by the Word of God ; and the most acute of its defenders have never been able to state it in a manner that is satisfactory, or which renders it subservient to any practical use. The Scripture, indeed, speaks of certain truths which may be called the foundation, because they are first laid, and others depend on them—first principles, or elementary truths, which are to be taught before others. But their priority or posteriority in point of order, in conception or instruction, does not determine the relative importance of doctrines, or their necessity in order to salvation, far less does it determine the propriety of their being made to enter into the religious profession of Christians and Christian churches. There are doctrines, too, which intrinsically, and on different accounts, may be said to have a peculiar and superior degree of importance ; and this, so far as known, may properly be urged as a motive for our giving the more earnest heed to them. It is not, however, their comparative importance or utility, but their truth and the authority of Him who has revealed them, which is the formal and proper reason of our receiving, professing, and maintaining them. And this applies equally to all the contents of a divine revelation. The relations of truths, especially those of a supernatural kind, are manifold and incomprehensible by us ; it is not our part to pronounce a judgment on them ; and if we could see them, as God does, in all their extent and at once, we would behold the lesser joined to the greater, the most remote connected with the primary, by necessary and indissoluble links, and all together conspiring to form one beautiful and harmonious and indivisible whole. Whatever God has revealed we are bound to receive and hold fast ; whatever he has enjoined we are bound to obey ; and the liberty which we dare not arrogate to ourselves we cannot give to others. It is not, indeed, necessary that the confession or testimony of the church (meaning by this that which is explicitly made by her, as distinguished from her declared adherence to the whole Word of God) should contain all truths ; but then any of them may come to be included in it, when opposed and endangered ; and it is no sufficient reason for excluding any of them that they are less important than others, or that they have been doubted and denied by good and learned men. Whatever forbearance may be exercised to persons, “the word of the Lord,” in all its extent, “must have free course and be glorified ;” and any act of men—call it forbearance or what you will—which serves as a screen or protection to error or sin, and prevents it from being opposed and removed by any

tion. Others, aware of what has been urged against it, choose to substitute the word fundamental in the room of essential ; and, for security's sake, they would add a few other articles to the fundamental. But what the one or the other are they do not tell.

proper means, is contrary to the divine law, and consequently is destitute of all intrinsic force and validity. There are truths also which are more immediately connected with salvation. But who will pretend to fix those propositions which are absolutely necessary to be known, in order to salvation—by all persons—of all capacities—and in all situations; or say how low a God of grace and salvation may descend in dealing with particular individuals? Or, if we could determine this extreme point, who would say that it ought to fix the rule of our dealing with others, or the extent of a church's profession of faith? Is nothing else to be kept in view in settling articles of faith and fellowship, but what may be necessary to the salvation of sinners? Do we not owe a paramount regard to the glory of God in the highest, to the edifying of the body of Christ, to the advancing of the general interests of religion, and to the preserving, in purity, of those external means by which, in the economy of providence and grace, the salvation of men, both initial and progressive, may be promoted to an incalculable extent from age to age? In fine, there is reason for complaining that the criteria or marks given for determining these fundamental or necessary articles, are uncertain or contradictory. Is it alleged that they are clearly taught in Scripture? This is true of others also. "That they are few and simple?" This is contradicted by their own attempts to state them. "That they are such as the Scripture has declared to be necessary?" Why then have we not yet been furnished with a catalogue of them? "That they are such as are embraced by all true Christians?" Have they a secret tact by which they are able to discover such characters? If not, can they avoid running into a vicious circle in reasoning, by first determining who are true Christians by their embracing certain doctrines, and then determining that these doctrines are fundamental because they are embraced by persons of that description?

Many who have contributed to give currency to this scheme have been actuated, I have no doubt, by motives which are in themselves highly commendable. They wished to fix the attention of men on matters confessedly of great importance, and were anxious to put an end to the dissensions of Christians by discovering a mean point in which the views of all might harmoniously meet. But surely those who cherish a supreme regard for divine authority will be afraid of contemning or of teaching others to think lightly of anything which bears its sacred impress. They will be disposed carefully to reconsider an opinion, or an interpretation of any part of Scripture, which seems to imply in it, that God has given to men a power to dispense with some of His own laws. And they will be cautious of originating or countenancing plans of communion that may involve a principle of such a complexion. These plans are more or less dangerous according to the extent to which they are carried, and the errors or abuses which may prevail among the parties which they embrace. But however limited they may be, they set an example which may be carried to any extent.

So far as it is agreed and stipulated, that any truth or duty shall be sacrificed or neglected, and that any error or sin shall be treated as indifferent or trivial, the essence of latitudinarianism is adopted, room is made for further advancements, and the way is prepared for ascending, through successive gradations, to the very highest degree in the scale.

Another plan of communion, apparently opposite to the former, but proceeding on the same general principle, has been zealously recommended, and in some instances reduced to practice, in the present day. According to it, the several religious parties are allowed to remain separate, and to preserve their distinct constitution and peculiarities, while a species of partial or occasional communion is established among them. This plan is liable to all the objections that lie against the former, with the addition of another which is peculiar to itself. It is inconsistent and self-contradictory. It strikes against the radical principles of the unity of the church, and confirms schism by a law; while it provides that the parties shall remain separate, at the same time that it proceeds on the supposition that there is no scriptural or conscientious ground of difference between them. By defending such occasional conformity, English Dissenters at a former period contradicted the reasons of their dissent from the establishment, and exposed themselves to their opponents: for where communion is lawful, it will not be easy to vindicate separation from the charge of schism. The world has for some time beheld annually the spectacle of Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Independents, Methodists, and Seceders, sitting down together at the Lord's table, and then going away and maintaining communion, through the remainder of the year, on their own separate and contradictory professions. Nay, it has of late become the practice to keep, in the same church, an open communion-table for Christians of different denominations on one part of the day, and a close one for those of a particular sect on the other part of the day; while the same minister officiates, and many individuals communicate, on both these occasions. And all this is cried up as a proof of liberality, and a mind that has freed itself from the trammels of party!¹

¹ In America, "A plan of Brotherly Correspondence" has recently been agreed to between the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church and the General Synod of the Associate Reformed Church. The first article of agreement is, "The churches are to remain entirely separate and independent." By the remaining articles it is provided, that members of either church may be admitted to communion with the other; and that the officers in any congregation of either church, may invite to their pulpit any minister or probationer in the other, "who preaches in their purity the great doctrines of the Gospel, as they are stated in the common Confession of Faith, and have generally been received and taught in the Reformed Churches." Those under cen-

sure in the one church are not to be received into the other. The members of presbyteries and synods of one of the churches may be invited to sit as corresponding members of the same judicatories of the other; but if not invited, they must not be offended. And a minister or elder from each of the supreme judicatories shall sit in the other, but without a vote.

Though I consider this plan as obnoxious to the censures in the text, I would not be understood as condemning all intercourse or correspondence between separate churches. On the contrary, I think that in some instances it may be of great utility, for paving the way for the removing of subsisting differences, and preventing or remedying offences, hurtful to the general interests of

It is difficult to say which of these plans is most objectionable. By the former, that church which is most faithful, and has made the greatest progress in reformation, must always be the loser, without having the satisfaction to think that she has conveyed any benefit to her new associates : it behoves her profession and managements to yield, and be reduced to the standard of those societies which are defective and less reformed ; and thus, by a process opposite to that mentioned by the apostle, those who have built on the foundation “ gold, silver, precious stones,” are the persons who shall “ suffer loss.” By the latter, all the good effects which might be expected from warrantable and necessary separations are lost, without the compensation of a rational and effective conjunction ; purity of communion is endangered ; persons are encouraged to continue in connection with the most corrupt churches ; and a faithful testimony against errors and abuses, with all consistent attempts to have them removed or prevented, is held up to odium and reproach, as dictated by bigotry, and as tending to revive old dissensions, and to defeat the delightful prospect of those halcyon days of peace which are anticipated under the reign of mutual forbearance and charity.

5. We may learn from this subject what is the temper of mind which becomes Christians in a time of abounding divisions in the church, and what are the qualities required in those who attempt to heal them. All have it in their power to contribute, in some degree, to the promoting of this work, and therefore ought to cherish the dispositions which correspond to it ; although this is in a more eminent manner the duty of such as possess superior influence, or who, from their station, may be called to take a leading part in the negotiations. And here I do not hesitate to name, as the primary qualification—*an inviolable love to truth and supreme regard to divine authority*. That person is totally disqualified for being a negotiator, or for acting the most subordinate part in such a sacred treaty, whose pulse does not beat high with this honourable and divine feeling. He will betray those interests which are in themselves the highest, and ought to be the dearest to all parties, whenever they are found irreconcilable with the attainment of an inferior object which he is determined to gain. When genuine, and pure, and enlightened, the feeling which we are recommending, so far from obstructing, as is often mistakingly imagined, will greatly facilitate and forward any negotiation to which a good man would wish success.—The next place is due to—a *peace disposition*. He who has said, “ Love the truth and peace,” intended to teach us, what we are sometimes disposed to disbelieve, that a regard to the former is not incompatible with a regard to the latter. In settling religious differences, the nice and difficult task is, to find out a way by which to adjust the claims of the two—to “ seek peace and ensue it,” without “ erring from

religion, which may arise from the manage- ing into communion of those who have fled
ments of either party ; such as, the receiv- from discipline in the other.

the truth ;” and who so fit for this as “the peaceable and faithful in Israel,” who are endued with “the wisdom that is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated ?”¹ If in any, surely in religious contests the maxim should be constantly kept in mind, the end of all war is peace. He is not a good Christian who does not sigh for it in the heat of the conflict, who does not court it in the moment of victory, who does not enjoy a triumph in sounding the trumpet which shall “bid the people return from following their brethren.”² The man who loves to live in the fire of contention, who feeds on debate and controversy, whose thoughts are never turned to peace, but are “like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt,” who is prepared to contest every point of common order as if it concerned the common salvation, is ever ready with his dissent, backed with its many reasons, against any ordinary measure which may not have obtained the sanction of his superior wisdom, and who flies off as soon as he finds that he cannot obtain his will in all things—this man is unfit for religious society, and though he may pretend to a zeal for God and religion, his zeal, like his wisdom, is not from above.—*Christian candour* is another quality which is requisite. This displays itself in an openness of mind to conviction, a readiness to hear whatever may be advanced, a disposition to give and receive explanations, and to pay all becoming deference not only to the reasons, but also to the difficulties and scruples of brethren on the points of difference, and to relieve these so far as may be practicable, safe, and consistent with public duty. It is also opposed to concealment, dissimulation, and all the crooked arts by which worldly politicians conduct their negotiations, and endeavour to obtain the best terms for their constituents. Far from those who engage in this holy work be all such Italian and Romish stratagems ! Every one ought to speak the truth to his neighbour as he thinketh, without equivocation or mental reservation : there ought to be no masked proposals—no ambiguous declarations—no secret articles—no understood agreement among leaders—no imposition on the credulity or the confidence of the Christian people. Genuine and unaffected candour has a powerful influence in inducing persons to persevere in a treaty when there may be great difficulties in the way of bringing it to a happy termination ; whereas duplicity and art excite jealousy in the breasts of the intelligent, and if successfully practised, lay a foundation for future repentance and disquiet.—*The gift of knowledge and wisdom* is requisite. This work requires a union of the qualities of the men of Zebulon and Naphtali who came to David, “to turn the kingdom of Saul to him according to the word of the Lord ;” they were “not of a double heart,” and they “had understanding of the times to know what Israel ought to do.”³ That dexterity and knowledge of mankind which qualifies some individuals for settling ordinary disputes about the things of this life or in the church, will avail little in the work of which we

¹ 2 Sam. xx. 19 ; James, iii. 17.² 2 Sam. ii. 26.³ 1 Chron. xii.

speak. It requires an accurate acquaintance with the subjects of dispute in all their bearings—of the signs of the times, their duties, sins, and dangers,—of the real character and dispositions of the parties, and other circumstances which may go to determine the call we have to engage in such an undertaking, or to persevere in it ;—not to mention an acquaintance with attempts of the same kind which have been made in former periods, with the effects which they produced, or the causes of their ill success.—Lastly, a *public and disinterested spirit* is indispensably requisite. Those individuals whom God has raised up in different ages to “do good to Zion in his good pleasure,” have been eminently endued with this disposition. Such was Moses, who showed himself fit for composing the strife of his afflicted brethren, when he “refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter ;” and proved himself worthy of “standing in the breach to turn away God’s anger” from Israel, when he magnanimously declined the offer of Heaven to “make of him a great nation.” Such also was Paul, who not only “became all things to all men,” and “a servant to all,” in things lawful and indifferent, but “could wish himself accursed from Christ for his brethren.” There are no sacrifices which are in their power, which persons of this spirit will not be disposed to make for accomplishing so good and great a design—their worldly interests, their reputation and honour, their station in the church of God, provided it prove an obstacle, they will cheerfully relinquish and lay at the feet of their brethren.

If these dispositions were more generally and more strongly displayed, there would be no ground for despairing of the abolition of many of our religious differences. Some of them no doubt imply a diversity of views so radical and extensive that it would be unreasonable to look for their speedy removal. But the cure of others may be said to be more within our own power. In vindication of the perspicuity of the Scriptures, and of the certainty of the standard of religion, it ought to be acknowledged that we often err from the path of duty, not so much because we cannot discover it, as because we are averse to it. “The light of the body is the eye : if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.”¹ If those who were once united had been true to their light and single in their aims ; if they had lived together as became brethren ; if they had been at one as to the ends of their Christian profession, and continued resolved, through grace, to prosecute them, “notwithstanding of whatever trouble or persecution they might meet with in essaying the faithful discharge of their duty,” fewer differences would have arisen among them, and these would have been more easily composed in the spirit of the Gospel : “Whereunto they had attained they would have walked by the same rule, they would have minded the same things ; and if in anything they were otherwise minded, God would have revealed even this unto them.”² When we are brought to a proper

¹ Matth. vi. 22.

² Philip. iii. 15, 16.

sense of the causes of our "divisions and offences," the cure of them will be more than half effected.

In fine, I would improve this subject for warning you against a twofold extreme into which persons are apt to run with respect to the present movements towards union. Beware of indifference to the object itself, or to any scriptural means for attaining it. You are under the strongest obligations, not only to "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," but also to be "workers together with God," who has promised to bestow this blessing. If others err by allowing this object to engross their attention, this will not excuse your lukewarmness, or your refusal to do what may be in your power, in your place and station, for promoting it in any degree. Hard-hearted must he be who can look unmoved on the wounds of the church, or pass by, like the priest and Levite in the parable, without feeling disposed to provide and pour in the healing oil and balm. It would be strange and unnatural indeed, if any son of Zion should rejoice in her trouble, and take pleasure in beholding perpetual strife and violence in the city of God, instead of seeing it a peaceful habitation. If a true Christian is unavoidably placed in a scene of confusion, he will sigh and pray for deliverance from it; and if conscience and the duty which he owes to God require him to say or do what may prove the occasion of disturbance or of alienating him from the affections of his brethren, he will sympathise deeply with the plaintive prophet, when he feelingly exclaims: "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast born me a man of strife and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me."¹ No wonder that attempts to heal divisions have been made, proposals of conciliation started, and plans of union concerted, in almost every age. The importance of the design might warrant them; and though they may not always have been in themselves proper or admissible, nor attended with success, yet the movers may deserve the praise and receive the blessing of peacemakers, so far as they singly intended and sincerely prosecuted an end confessedly laudable. Every person of right feeling will be disposed to construe charitably, and to censure with lenity, some errors and miscarriages which may be committed in the management of such attempts; provided no selfish interest or dishonest snare lurk under the mask of conciliation, and provided the plans do not evidently tend to produce other evils, greater than those which they propose to remedy.

It is no less necessary to warn you, on the other hand, against being ensnared by fair and plausible schemes of union. Remember that the Spirit of Error takes an active part in the unions as well as in the divisions of Christians; and be not ignorant of his devices. Of old he deceived the people of God by raising the cry of Peace, peace; and so successful has he found this stratagem, that he has ever since had

¹ Jer. xv. 10.

recourse to it at intervals. There is a rage for peace as well as for contention, and men otherwise wise and good have been seized by it as well as the giddy multitude. If religion has suffered from merciless polemics and cruel dividers, history shows that it has suffered no less from the false lenity and unskilful arts of pretended physicians—the motley tribe of those who have assumed the name of reconcilers. They will say that they have no intention to injure the truth ; but it is your duty carefully to examine the tendency of their proposals, and not to suffer yourselves to be caught with “good words and fair speeches.” Have nothing to do with those plans of agreement, in which the corner-stone is not laid in a sacred regard to all that is sanctioned by the authority of your Lord. Beware of all such coalitions as would require you to desert a faithful and necessary testimony for the truths and laws of Christ, would call you back from prosecuting a just warfare against any error or sin, would involve you in a breach of your lawful engagements, or prevent you from paying the vows you have made to God. Keep in mind that there are duties incumbent on you beside that of following peace. Violate not “the brotherly covenant” by which you may be already bound to walk with your fellow-Christians in a holy and good profession, from a fond and passionate desire of forming new connections. Throw not rashly away a present and known good for the prospect of a greater which is uncertain and contingent ; and do not suffer your minds to be diverted from the ordinary duties of your Christian vocation, by engaging in extraordinary undertakings, while the call to these is not clear, and you have not good ground to depend on God for that extraordinary aid which is required in prosecuting them.

The text on which we have been discoursing, my friends, and others of the same kind in the sacred volume, will, if rightly improved, keep you from this as well as the former extreme. If your hearts are established by a firm persuasion that God will, according to His promise and in His own time, restore unity and peace to His church, you will be kept equally from negligence and impatience, from indifference and precipitation. “Against hope you will believe in hope, that it shall be as God has said ;” but you will “not make haste,” nor have recourse to any improper means for obtaining the blessing. He knows to choose the best season for beginning and completing the work. We may think Him remiss and slack in performing His promises, weary at His delays, attempt to anticipate Him with unbelieving and impatient haste, or tempt Him by saying presumptuously, “Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it ! and let the counsel of the Holy One of Israel draw nigh and come, that we may know it !”¹ The check which our Saviour imposed on His disciples is needful here : “My time is not yet come : but your time is always ready.”² He has ends, wise, important, and every way worthy of Himself, to serve by permitting the continuance as well as the entrance of divisions. Divine truth must be cleared and

¹ Isa. v. 19.

² John, vii. 6.

purified from every foreign admixture by its being submitted to the ordeal of keen controversy. The faithfulness of its professed friends must be tried ; the hypocrisy of false disciples detected ; and the ignorance, imperfection, and mistakes which cleave to the best discovered. God must be glorified by preserving the cause of religion in the world, not only in opposition to its open enemies, but also amidst all the dissensions and rivalships and deadly feuds which prevail among its professed friends. When these and similar objects have been accomplished, He will "hasten his word to perform it." Having begun the good work, He will not draw back His hand until He has "finished it in righteousness."

Are there any who, when they hear of the future uniting of all Christians in profession, affection, and practice, are disposed to receive the intimation with a smile of incredulity, to treat the prospect as visionary, and to exclaim, "How can these things be? Will God create a new race on the earth? Will He give a new structure to the minds of men? Will they not continue to think and act about religion as they have done from the beginning until now?" Hear the word of the Lord, ye scornful men: Is it a small matter for you to weary men, will ye weary my God also? Hath He not said, "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me?" And will He not do it? Let God be true, and every man a liar. When the time comes, the time which He hath set for accomplishing His promise, He shall arise, and every difficulty and every obstruction shall give way before Him and vanish at His approach. Do you ask a sign? Do you ask it in the heaven above? It is He that "binds the sweet influences of Pleiades, and looses the" frozen "bands of Orion—and guides Arcturus with his sons."¹ Do you ask it in the earth beneath? "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them;—for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."² The Infinite One has, in His faithful word, pledged all His perfections for the accomplishment of this work. What resistance can be opposed to infinite power, put in motion by infinite love, and guided by infinite wisdom? He can raise up instruments properly qualified and disposed for promoting His design, guide their counsels, animate them to constancy and perseverance, and finally crown all their exertions with the wished-for success. He has the hearts of all men in His hand, and can turn them like the waters in an aqueduct. He can rebuke the spirit of error and delusion, "cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land," and remove and abolish all things that offend in His kingdom. He can subdue the most stubborn and inveterate prejudices, allay the fiercest heats and animosities, convert jealousies into confidence, and hatred into love, and having "made the wrath of man to praise him" by accomplishing His purposes, can "restrain the remainder thereof."

¹ Job, xxxviii. 31, 32.

² Isa. xi. 5, 9.

Who is among you that feareth the Lord, and obeyeth the voice of His servant, who walketh in darkness and hath no light as to the removal or abatement of the melancholy divisions of the church? Let him plant his faith firmly on the promises of Jehovah, and stay himself on His perfections. Say with the prophet Jeremiah, in a similar case, "Ah, Lord God! behold thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power; and there is nothing too hard for thee; the Great, the Mighty God, the Lord of Hosts is his name: Great in counsel, and mighty in work."¹ Place yourself in spirit in the midst of the emblematical valley into which Ezekiel was carried, and say, God who raiseth the dead can easily do this. Rivers, deep and broad, seas, noisy and tempestuous, "on which no galley with oars can go, neither gallant ship ride," have disparted the territories which the God of heaven hath given to his Son, and prevented the intercourse of His subjects. But He "shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and with his mighty wind shall he shake his hand over the river, and smite it in the seven streams thereof, and make men go over dry-shod. And there shall be a highway for the remnant of his people; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt."² Brazen "mountains of separation" may stand in the way of this desirable event. But the resistance which they oppose to it shall be overcome, not according to the confused plan of modern projectors, by throwing a scaffolding over them, by which those who have reared altars on their tops may hold occasional intercourse and partial communion; but in a way becoming the New Testament Zerubbabel, The Disperser of Confusion. When he rends the heavens and comes down to do things which we looked not for, "the mountains shall flow down at his presence."³ Those separations which have been of most ancient date, and which threatened to last for ever, shall yield to His power. "The everlasting mountains shall be scattered, the perpetual hills shall bow" before Him whose "ways are everlasting."⁴ If there shall be one that has reared its head above all the rest, and makes a more formidable resistance, it also shall crumble down and disappear: "Who art thou, O great mountain? before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain."⁵ Then shall the mountain on which the house of God is built be established on the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow to it. And He will rebuke and repress the envious risings of its proudest rival. "A hill of God is the hill of Bashan; a high hill is the hill of Bashan. But why lift ye up yourselves, ye high hills? This (Zion) is the hill which God desireth to dwell in; yea, the Lord will dwell in it for ever."⁶

May God fulfil these promises in due time; and unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

¹ Jer. xxxii. 17—19.

² Isa. lxiv. 1.

⁴ Hab. iii. 6.

⁵ Zech. iv. 7.

² Isa. xi. 15, 16.

⁶ Ps. lxxviii. 15, 16.

APPENDIX.

A SHORT VIEW OF THE PLAN OF RELIGIOUS REFORMATION AND UNION ADOPTED ORIGINALLY BY THE SECESSION.

THE Bible is the great repository of divine truth, and standard of what is to be believed and practised in religion. It is the duty of the church to bring forth the sacred treasure, to circulate it, and to preserve any part of it from being lost, debased, or deteriorated. Ever since the completing of the canon of Scripture, it has been the work of Christians, individually and as associated, to make profession of "the faith once delivered to the saints," and "earnestly to contend" for it, in opposition to all attempts to destroy its purity or defeat its influence. That society whose religious profession is not founded on and conformable to the Scriptures, can have no claim to be considered as "the house of the living God." But while the matter, as well as the ground, of the church's profession is properly speaking divine, the acts and modes of professing and maintaining it are necessarily human. When false and corrupt views of Christianity become general, it is necessary that confessions of the truth in opposition to them be embodied in formal and written documents, which may be known and read by all men. *Vox emissa perit: litera scripta manet.* It is not enough that Christians confess their faith individually: to comply with divine commands, to answer to their character as church members, and the better to gain the ends in view, it is requisite that they make a joint and common confession. When the truths contained in the word of God have been explicitly stated and declared, in opposition to existing errors, by the proper authority in a church, an approbation of such statements and declarations may be required, as a test of soundness in the faith and of Christian fidelity, without any unwarrantable imposition on conscience, or the most distant reflection on the perfection of Scripture. The same arguments which justify the use of creeds and confessions will also justify particular declarations or testimonies directed against errors and corruptions prevailing in churches which still retain scriptural formularies. Those who allow the former cannot consistently condemn the latter. It is not sufficient to entitle persons to the character of faithful witnesses of Christ, that they profess a general adherence to the Bible or a sound confession of faith, provided they refuse or decline to direct and apply these seasonably against present evils. It might as well be said that the soldier has acquitted himself well in a battle, because he had excellent armour lying in a magazine, or a sword

hanging by his side, although he never brought forth the armour nor drew his sword from its scabbard. The means alluded to are the unsheathing of the sword and the wielding of the armour of the church. So far from setting aside the authority of Scripture, they are necessary for keeping a sense of it alive on the spirits of men, and for declaring the joint views and animating the combined endeavours of those who adhere to it. By explaining and applying a rule, we do not add to it, nor do we detract from its authority.

True religion, intrinsically considered, is neither variable nor local. Christianity is the same now that it was eighteen hundred years ago ; it is the same in America or Otaheite as in Britain. But this is not inconsistent with varieties in the profession made of it in different ages and countries. The attack is not always made on it from the same quarter, nor directed against the same point. This must regulate the faithful contentings of the church ; and accordingly her testimony, though ever substantially the same, has been greatly diversified in respect of its form and direction ; just as a river in its long-continued course assumes different appearances, winds in several directions, and is seen running sometimes in a narrower and at other times in a more extensive channel. In the New Testament we meet with frequent references to the circumstances in which the churches were placed among the adherents of Judaism or of Pagan idolatry, as serving to point out and determine the peculiar duties, dangers, and temptations of Christians. The instructions, warnings, and reproofs, contained in the epistles which the apostles addressed primarily to certain churches and individuals, bear directly on their respective circumstances, and are intermingled with numerous references to facts on which they were founded. Certain classes of false teachers and evil workers are specified ; and individuals are mentioned by name, both those who had deserved well of the church by their faithfulness and important services, and those who, by their opposition to the Gospel and propagating of false doctrine, had incurred public censure or justly exposed themselves to it. In the letters sent to the seven Asian churches, our Lord intimates that he took notice and judged of the conduct of each according to its particular and local circumstances, and not merely in reference to duties and trials common to all. "I know thy works, and where thou dwellest." The church of Ephesus is praised because she "could not bear them that were evil," had tried and convicted certain persons who "said they were apostles and were not," and had testified her hatred to "the deeds of the Nicolaitans." While the church of Pergamos is blamed for retaining in her communion "them that held the doctrine of Balaam and of the Nicolaitans," she is commended by Christ, because she had "held fast his name and not denied his faith, even in those days wherein Antipas was his faithful martyr, who was slain among them." There are peculiar obligations which Christians are subjected to by their birth and lot in the world ; and then, and then only, can they be said to act a faithful part, when they endeavour to discharge their duty in all its extent according to their actual and relative situation. So far is it from being true, in this respect, that a religious profession ought to be disencumbered of all localities or references to the facts of a particular period or country, that, on the contrary, its due and seasonable application to these is a test of its faithfulness.

At the happy era of the Reformation, many of the grosser corruptions which had grown during the long-continued defection which had preceded, were removed in several countries : and in some of these, particularly in Scotland,

religion was settled on a scriptural basis and in great purity. Had reformation been at its height in all the Protestant churches, or had that which was attained in some of them been placed beyond the danger of being changed or relinquished, there would have been no need for testimonies or contendings in the way of separation from them. Few will pretend that this is the case. In the constitutions of some of these churches the features of the Man of Sin are but too visible, and those of them that were most renowned for beauty have given evidence of their defectibility by actually falling into decay. To rectify the one and recover the other, is a work which deserves the attention and utmost endeavours of all who wish well to the interests of religion. And to accomplish these ends in some degree within their sphere, was what those who declared a Secession from the established Church of Scotland proposed by the association which they formed, and avowed in the Testimony or Declaration of their views and intentions which they published to the world. As their object has been much misunderstood, and as mistaken, or narrow and partial notions of it have been adopted, not only by their opponents, but also by not a few of their professed friends, it may perhaps be of some use to take a cursory view of it.

Some have represented Seceders as holding a set of religious principles altogether peculiar to themselves, and have attempted, ignorantly or artfully, to set these in opposition to the principles held in common by other Christians and Protestants. Such a representation is groundless and injurious. Their profession, while it rests on the ground common to all true Protestants, the supreme authority of Scripture, embraces the general interests of Christianity, and gives them their due place and importance. Whatever others, as Christians, Protestants, or Presbyterians, profess and glory in, they vindicate as theirs too, and have embodied in their testimony. With respect to those things by which they are distinguished, in principle or in practice, from other denominations of Presbyterians, and which will be called *their* peculiarities, they plead that these are either expressly warranted by the Word of God and the subordinate formularies of the Church of Scotland, or follow from them, as conclusions from premises and corollaries from geometrical axioms. And they plead further that these are, in different respects, necessary to the support and the consistent maintenance of the other. On the contrary, some late partial historians of the Secession have done injury to its cause in another way. In order to present it in a point of view more attractive to the spirit of the present age, or more congenial to their own sentiments, they have narrowed its ground, thrown some of its prominent parts into shade, and fixed the attention wholly on others, which, however important in the eyes of the founders of the Secession, never occupied their entire and exclusive regards. The exertions which they made in defence of the leading doctrines of the Gospel, and the rights of the Christian people, are too well known to stand in need of empty panegyric; and those do little honour to their memory who deal in this, while they disparage or throw a veil over their contendings in behalf of a great and extensive cause of which these formed but a part.

When it appeared that there was no reasonable prospect of the grounds of their separation being removed, and of their being able to return conscientiously into the bosom of the established church, the Seceding ministers found it their duty to dispense divine ordinances to those through the country who laboured under the same grievances with themselves. But they did not act

on the limited principle, afterwards adopted by another society, of merely affording relief to those who felt galled and oppressed by the yoke of Patronage ; nor did they think that they could discharge the duty which, as ministers of Christ and of the Church of Scotland, they owed to the existing and subsequent generations, if they confined their endeavours to the promoting of what immediately concerned the spiritual interests of those who might place themselves under their ministerial and judicative inspection. They felt that there was a public cause, and more general and extensive interests, which had a claim upon them. They, along with the people adhering to them, had for a series of years been testifying, in communion with the established church, against a variety of evils deeply affecting the interests of religion, or, as they express it in their Deed of Secession, "a course of defection from our reformed and covenanted principles." Finding themselves now placed in a new situation, and in the possession of greater liberty than they had formerly enjoyed ; looking around them on the religious state of the church and nation with which they were connected ; and taking into serious consideration the manifold obligations under which they lay, they judged themselves called, "in the course of sovereign and holy Providence, to essay the revival of reformation," and to employ all the means competent to them for advancing this work. In prosecution of this design they published their Judicial Testimony and other official papers, settled the terms of their communion, and regulated their public managements.

The object proposed by the founders of this association was of a precise and definite kind. As they did not push themselves forward, nor put their hand to a work of such difficulty, without being satisfied of the call which they had to engage in it, nor propose to do more for its advancement than Providence might put in their power, and lay within their sphere as an ecclesiastical body ; so they did not conceal the objects which they aimed at, nor leave the world in any doubt as to their nature and extent. It was a specific reformation which they proposed. They did not come forward in the suspicious character of general reformers, who would not avow what they intended to pull down, and did not know what they would build up in its room ; they did not plan a reform according to a scheme of principles of their own ; nor was it their object to overturn that church which had lately driven them from its communion. But they appeared as a part of the Church of Scotland, adhering to her reformed constitution, testifying against the injuries which it had received, seeking the redress of these, and pleading for the revival of a reformation, attained, according to the Word of God, in a former period, approved by every authority in the land, and ratified by solemn vows to the Most High. Without right views of this Reformation it is impossible to understand the Secession Testimony ; and disaffection to the former, in proportion to the degree in which it prevails, necessarily implies a dereliction of the latter.

The same principles which led our fathers in Scotland to free themselves from the tyranny and corruptions of Rome, induced their successors to cast off the imposed yoke of a Protestant hierarchy, and to rid themselves of the abuses which it had brought along with it. When they associated for this purpose, they needed only to renew the covenant by which popery had been first abjured, with a few slight explications and accommodations of its language to their existing circumstances. It is not, therefore, needful for me to go farther back than the Second Reformation, as it is usually called, which took place

between the year 1638 and 1650, and which embodied, in its proceedings and settlement, all the valuable attainments of the First Reformation, and carried them to a greater extent. These included summarily,—the revival of the purity of doctrine, which had been corrupted by Popish errors introduced under the new garb of Arminianism—of the purity of worship, which had been depraved by the imposition of foreign rites and ceremonies—and of the government, discipline, and liberties of the church, which had been supplanted and overthrown by royal supremacy and the usurpations of prelacy.

But the most important and discriminating feature of this period was the extension of the Reformation to England and Ireland. It is well-known that religion was very imperfectly reformed in the first as well as in the last of these countries, and that many Popish abuses and corruptions were allowed to remain in its worship and government. These defects had been all along complained of by the best English Protestants, who often sighed for the purity and freedom of religion enjoyed by their neighbours. The growing oppression of the ecclesiastical courts, the religious innovations tending to pave the way for peace with Rome, and the invasions on the civil liberties of the nation during the early administration of Charles I., inflamed these complaints and wishes, and communicated them to the greater and better part of that kingdom. The struggle which ensued between the friends of reformation and liberty on the one hand, and an arbitrary and popishly-affected court on the other, led to the formation of the famous *Solemn League*, which had for its principal and leading object the preservation of the reformed religion in Scotland, the reformation of religion in England and Ireland, and the bringing of the churches in the three kingdoms to the nearest conjunction and uniformity in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government. From this time the Reformation in Scotland, England, and Ireland was combined, and whatever may since have been its actual fate in any of these countries, its true and enlightened friends have never ceased to regard it as one common object of interest, and, so far as it was in their power to promote it, of endeavour and exertion. The steps taken to fulfil these sacred stipulations, the progress made in the work, and the causes of its being interrupted in England, endangered in Scotland, and at last perfidiously overthrown in the three kingdoms, are known to all who are not utter strangers to the most interesting and eventful period of the history of Britain.

The work of which we speak was properly one—a reformation of religion ; although we usually speak of it as ecclesiastical and civil, in respect of the two authorities engaged in carrying it on. The *Ecclesiastical* Reformation in Scotland consisted of what was done by the judicatories of the church, to whom it belonged directly and properly to set in order the house of God, and to correct what was amiss in religious profession or practice. This includes the condemning of the Episcopal innovations and abuses, the reviving of the Presbyterian worship and discipline, and in general the raising up of the ancient constitution of the church from the rubbish in which it had been buried for many years ; all of which was preceded by the renewing of the National Covenant. It includes also the encouragement given by the General Assembly to the proposals of union with England and Ireland, their forming and promoting of the Solemn League and Covenant, sending of commissioners to the Assembly of Divines at Westminster, receiving and approving of the formularies agreed on by that Assembly, and proceeding to act on them as subordinate standards

of that religious unity and conjunction between the churches in the three kingdoms which they had sworn to promote. The *Civil* Reformation consists in what was done by the civil authorities, within their sphere, and in co-operation with the ecclesiastical judicatories, for advancing the same cause. This includes what was done by the Parliament, or the Convention of Estates, in Scotland (not to speak at present of the Parliament of England), in abolishing Episcopacy, legalising what the church had done in the revival of presbytery, entering into and prosecuting the ends of the League with England and Ireland, sanctioning the standards of uniformity, ratifying the liberties of the church and abolishing patronage, reforming places of power and trust, and settling the constitutional laws of the kingdom in such a way as to secure the reformation which had been attained.

When Seceders, in their Testimony and other public papers, speak of our Civil Reformation, they do not mean a reform objectively civil, or which embraced objects which were purely civil and political. They express an approbation of the struggles of our ancestors in behalf of civil liberty, which, indeed, was at that period closely and inseparably connected with religion. But they were aware that it was incompetent for them as a religious body to bear a testimony in favour of a particular form of civil government, or of certain laws as contributing most to the political welfare of a people. They can be understood only as referring to civil laws and managements, so far as they had religion for their object, or as they affected and were in one way or another connected with its interests, by contributing to its advancement or security. And in the same sense must we understand them, when they condemn the political settlement by which the reformation was overturned, or particular parts of the existing constitution and laws. Viewed in this light, an approbation of "our ancient Civil Reformation," and a disapprobation of "our present civil deformation," form a necessary and important branch of their testimony and profession.¹

¹ Speaking of the *Judicial Act and Testimony*, the Associate Presbytery say, in their Answers to Mr Nairn: "According to the particular calls of Providence hitherto, that Testimony, — was especially in favours of our ancient *ecclesiastical* Reformation; and against those evils whereby the same hath been, in a great measure, departed from and overthrown: while a Testimony for our ancient *civil* reformation, — and against these evils whereby the same hath been, in a great measure, deviated from and destroyed; was lifted up, and all along carried forward. But at this time the Presbytery have a particular call of Providence, — to bear witness more especially unto our ancient *civil* reformation." Having laid down in general the principles on which such a reformation rests, they proceed to say: "Agreeably unto all this, the Deed of Civil Constitution was set upon a reformed footing; by Act VIII., Parl. 1, James VI. Though the above settlement was for some time followed by suitable administration, yet a course of lamentable defection and corruption therein did soon prevail: 'Till a reviving of the true religion and reformation in the church took place, and was gloriously advanced betwixt the years 1638 and 1650. That work of God,

which became then engaged unto throughout the three kingdoms by a Solemn League and Covenant, — was also, in an agreeableness to this Covenant, accompanied with and supported by a civil reformation. In England (wherewith we have become more nearly concerned than formerly, by virtue of the Solemn League and Covenant), the civil administration was, in some valuable instances, subservient unto the said work of God. But more considerable advances were made in Scotland: While, beside many laudable acts in the civil administration, the deed of Civil Constitution was farther reformed than ever before; by Act XV. of the second session of Parliament, anno 1649. And according unto this settlement was King Charles II. crowned at Scoon, January 1st 1651.

"The Presbytery intend not to affirm, that there was nothing defective in the above managements; or that no imprudencies or mistakes were to be found therein. It is evident, however, that, by the good hand of God, the Estates of England, but more especially of Scotland, were inspired with a noble and predominant zeal for the House of God, in all its valuable institutions; and attained to a considerable

By the good hand of God upon her, Scotland attained to greater purity in religion, and higher degrees of reformation, than any other protestant country. It is the duty of one generation to declare the works of God to another, and no people can depart from religious attainments without being deeply guilty. But this is not all. In no nation has the true religion been so solemnly avouched as in Scotland. Every important step taken in reformation was accompanied with confessions, protestations, vows, covenants, and oaths, which were made and subscribed by all ranks, voluntarily, cheerfully, joyfully, repeated on every new emergency and call, and ratified by every authority in the land. Hence, it has obtained the distinguishing name of the *covenanted* reformation; and under this view was it embraced by the associated body of Seceders, who, by renewing these engagements in an oath adapted to the time and to their circumstances as a church, served themselves heirs to the professions, vows, and contentings of their fathers, or rather to the cause of God transmitted to them by their fathers under all these sacred sanctions and solemnities.

It is of importance to distinguish between the reformation *materially* and *formally* considered. The Westminster standards were not the reformation, nor did they form any part of it farther than they were received and approved, and than religion was reformed and settled according to them. We may approve of the Confessions of the reformed church of France or of Helvetia, or of Holland. In like manner persons may approve of the Westminster standards, as to doctrine, worship, and church-government, and a religious society may conduct its ecclesiastical affairs according to them; and yet they may not adopt or promote the covenanted reformation, properly and formally considered. To adhere to these, since the reformation took place, is to adopt them as a system of religion which is still entitled, both by divine and by human right, to be professed and established in the three nations;—to testify against all proceedings prejudicial to it, and all laws introducing or maintaining another system, as what no friend of reformation, can bind himself actively to support and countenance;—and to hold that it is the duty of all classes to endeavour, in their station and by all lawful means, to have the reformed and Presbyterian religion publicly and legally settled,—and that from the consideration not only of the divine authority on which it rests and its intrinsic excellence, but also of the additional obligation arising from national oaths and leagues, and the former attainments and laws of church and state, which are still virtually pleadable, and in a moral point of view retain their force. Thus formally was the covenanted reformation adopted and testified for by Seceders.¹ Hence the particularity with which they specified and condemned,

pitch of civil reformation, subservient unto the same: All which this Presbytery desires, with thankfulness, to commemorate and bear witness unto. Upon the whole, it is observable, that in Scotland, the reformation of the church hath always, in a beautiful order, preceded and introduced the reformation of the State." Display of the Secession Testimony, vol. i. pp. 278, 281—284.

¹ "The profession, defence, and maintenance of the true religion, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and Presbyterian church-government, agreeable unto and founded upon the Word of God,—was secured by the fundamental constitution of the civil

government in our reforming periods; which deed of constitution, *in all moral respects*, is *morally* unalterable,—because of its agreeableness to the divine will revealed in the Word, and because it was attained to and fixed in pursuance of our Solemn Covenants." The Associate Presbytery's Answers to Mr Nairn, in Display, vol. i. p. 274. In the same paper, the Presbytery, after deploring "the fatal overthrow of the former civil reformation" at the Restoration, and pointing out in what respects the settlements at the Revolution and Union were inconsistent with it, concludes thus: "Upon the whole, it appears, that, under the present constitution, a mighty bar is

in their judicial acts, the various steps of deviation from this cause in church and in state. They condemned not only the series of wicked laws passed at the Restoration, but also various evils in the Revolution settlement, and in the incorporating Union, by the fundamental articles of which Scotland was "more deeply involved in perjury" by giving her consent to "the maintenance and preservation of the hierarchy and ceremonies of the Church of England."¹ Hence also the care with which they guarded against all professions or engagements which implied an approbation of these defections and of the united constitution. They evinced this by declining to swear the usual public oaths, at the expense of relinquishing privileges to which they were otherwise entitled, and of exposing themselves to the charge of disloyalty from those who were ignorant of their principles or disposed to misrepresent them.²

This is the fair amount of their principles on this head, and what they never sought to conceal from the beginning. But they, at the same time, denied that any minority, and far less that they themselves, as an ecclesiastical body, had any right to dictate laws to the nation. They reckoned that they did all that was incumbent on them, when they gave information and warning, as they were called from time to time, respecting public sins and duties, and when they continued to promote religious reformation within their own sphere. They did not stretch themselves beyond their line, nor suffer themselves to be diverted, by the testimony which they bore against public evils, from opposing those of a more private kind, and whose remedy lay more directly within their reach; nor did they, it is hoped, become indifferent about those ends which ought to be kept immediately in view by every church of Christ—the salvation of sinners, and building up of saints on their most holy faith. They never judged that they had a call to address the throne or the legislature on the subject of religion; and they knew that no such change as they desired can take place in the national profession and laws with regard to it, until a previous change shall have been effected on the sentiments and inclinations of the various orders of the people.³

I know that it has now become fashionable to discredit this work, and to represent every appearance of attachment to it as a sure mark of bigotry, and a mind weakly wedded to ancient prejudices, or, as some modishly express it, to the relics of a barbarous age. To the most of our modern great pretenders to religion the very name of a Covenanted Reformation is offensive and intolerable. Many who would still fain speak well of it, look upon anything that was good in it as of temporary interest, and quite unsuitable to our times; while the greater part of those who once appeared as its avowed and sworn friends, after shrinking from the odium attached to it, and testifying their willingness to divide the cause, appear now to be ashamed even to name it. But is there any good reason for this? 'I may venture to assert, that if ever all that was great and valuable to a people was concerned in any work, it was concerned in

thrust in the way of our covenanted reformation, both in church and state: yea, a gravestone is laid and established on the same." Answers to Mr Nairn, in Display, vol. i. p. 286.

¹ Ibid. p. 285.

² Ibid. p. 291. The inconsistency of an unqualified approbation of the present constitution with adherence to a previous reformation, is maintained by the Associate Presbytery in that Public Deed, the

express design of which is to condemn "the dangerous extreme, which some had gone into, of impugning the present civil authority over these nations, and subjection thereunto in lawful commands,—on account of the want of these qualifications magistrates ought to have by the Word of God and our covenants; even although they allow us the free exercise of our religion, and are not manifestly unheeding the liberties of the kingdom." ³ Ibid. p. 280.

that under our consideration. The design was nothing less than the advancement of true religion, in connection with liberty—of religion, in all its extent, among individuals, families, and the public, and the providing, in the best manner, for the continuance and perpetuity of it in the three kingdoms, that unborn posterity might reap the fruits of the toil and travel and sufferings of their fathers, and might live happily in peace and in the fear of God. It proposed the correction of abuses which had long been matter of grievance ; and the settlement of religion and church-order on scriptural principles and agreeably to known and approved precedents, and not according to any visionary, hazardous, or untried scheme. It was the effect of long and ardent wishes, and of many prayers. The wisest and most godly in Britain, from the commencement of the Reformation, had desired to see such a work, and hailed it at a distance. Providence afforded an opportunity for engaging in it when it was least expected, and for some time smiled on the attempt. Nor was it overturned until the benefits to be expected from it were attested in the experience of thousands, who till then had been almost total strangers to Christianity.

Let sober thinkers only reflect for a moment, what advantages would have ensued, if religion had been settled agreeably to the Solemn League and the plan recommended by the Westminster Assembly ; and if that settlement had been allowed to stand. Of what benefit would it have been to England, if a lordly hierarchy, together with a burdensome and unprofitable mass of human rites and ceremonies, and an ignorant, idle, and scandalous clergy, had been removed ; and if, in their place, an evangelical, pious, laborious, and regular ministry had been settled in every parish, with elders to inspect the morals of the people, and deacons to attend to the wants of the poor, under the superintendence of presbyteries and synods ! Would not this have proved of incalculable advantage to that nation, in a religious, moral, and political point of view ? Would it not have been a powerful check on the spread of error, the increase of schism, and the prevalence of ignorance, profaneness, and vice ? Of what benefit might it not have been before this day to unhappy Ireland, which has been perhaps more indebted to colonies from Scotland, and to the religion imported by them, than to any boon it has received from England ! And would not great benefit have redounded from it to Scotland herself, whose ecclesiastical constitution and liberties, as well as the religious principles and habits of her people, have suffered so much formerly and of late, from her intimate connection with a country in which a system opposite in various respects to hers has been established ? If there is any truth in the representation now given, let me again ask, Is it not matter of the deepest regret that this work should have been interrupted and overturned ? That it continues still buried ? That an opposite system was reared on its grave, which has been and still is productive of manifold evils ? Are not these national sins ? Is it possible to free them from the high aggravation of perfidy, after the solemn pledges that were publicly exchanged and ratified ? Is it not a great duty to testify against these sins, and to seek a revival of that Reformation ? This is what has been done by Seceders. If this forms their peculiarity, they have reason to glory in, not to be ashamed of it ; and the only real disgrace which they can incur is that which will attach to their withdrawing from the cause, and deserting their good profession.

In considering this cause there are two things which are very commonly

overlooked and which merit particular attention. In the first place, it embraced *a plan of religious union*. This was its avowed object. It was so from the beginning, and was kept in eye through the whole progress of the work. Reformation was a means to this end. It was indeed absolutely necessary to the attainment of it. The corruptions retained in the English Church—the hierarchy, with its usurped claims, temporal and spiritual, the liturgy, the total absence of all ecclesiastical discipline, a non-resident and non-preaching clergy, the Arminian and Popish errors which they had patronised,—these, with various abuses connected with them, had proved a source of continued discord and division in England, had embroiled her with Scotland, and served as a wall of partition between her and all foreign churches professing the same faith. Until these evils were removed it was vain to look for union either at home or abroad. The platform of reformation was so constructed as to promise the accomplishment of this desirable object. The system of faith laid down in the Confession and Catechisms was substantially the same with what was declared in the Confessions and Catechisms of all the reformed on the Continent. The form of church-government was “according to the Word of God and the example of the best reformed churches.” Public worship was set free from the trammels of a formal and stinted liturgy, and at the same time duly guarded by the Directory, which, while it “held forth such things as are of divine institution in every ordinance,” regulated others “according to the rules of Christian prudence, agreeable to the general rules of the Word of God,” and gave such instructions to ministers as tended to produce “a consent of all the churches in those things that contain the substance of the service and worship of God.” The more narrowly the proceedings of the Assembly which prepared the model of religious reformation and uniformity are looked into, the more, I am persuaded, will it appear, that, in the conclusions to which they came (particularly on the controversies which arose at that time among the friends of religion), they displayed a healing and moderate spirit, combined with an enlightened regard to truth and the general welfare of the church, which showed them to be uncommonly fitted for the great task which Providence assigned to them, and which has not been displayed in the same degree by any assembly, extraordinary or ordinary, which the world has since seen.

The second thing to which I alluded as meriting particular notice in this work, is *the extensive scale* on which it was undertaken. Its object was not only to reform and unite, but to reform religion and settle unity through three kingdoms. Nor was this all. Though called more immediately to provide for their own safety and to promote Christianity in that part of the world where they dwelt, those who embarked in it did not confine their views to this object. They had before their eyes the security of “the true religion and professors thereof in all places,” the forming of an association among “other Christian churches,” and in general “the enlargement of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.” These ends, expressed in their solemn bond of confederation, were never lost sight of in the prosecution of their undertaking. Theirs was no narrow, contracted, or sectarian plan. On the contrary, it was one of their principal objects, in all that they did, to testify their charity and conformity to all the reformed churches, to abolish those restrictions which had prevented free intercourse with them, and to secure union, communion, and co-operation with them upon the great principles of Christianity and Protestantism.

Under both of these important views was the Reformation adopted by Seceders. In publishing their Testimony, their language on the matter was : " We have no *peculiar* principles : we abide by and declare our adherence to those books which are still professedly owned by the national Church of Scotland, and which were agreed on as the standards of religious uniformity in the three nations ; we are willing to hold communion with all who shall be found consistently adhering to these ; and to them, as a subordinate test, we are ready to submit the decision of every point which forms the subject of dispute and controversy between us and others." The same language all true adherents to the cause of the Reformation still continue to hold. The same offers they still make. In vindicating their Secession, and stating its grounds, they were necessarily led to give greater prominence to the state of religion in Scotland, and to their contendings with the judicatories of that church with which they had been intimately connected. But they did not allow these to engross their regard. They considered it as a high duty to promote religion in England and Ireland, which are as much interested in the cause of the Secession, rightly understood, as Scotland. When they complied with petitions from these countries, and erected congregations in consequence of them, they did not lay themselves open to the charge of enlisting followers under the standard of a party, or engaging them in local controversies in which they had no concern ; but could plead, with the utmost truth, that they only embodied them under principles and obligations which were common to the three nations. In fine, while they considered themselves bound to do what in them lay to enlarge the kingdom of Christ, they reckoned that they had a special call to send the Gospel to those distant parts of the world where there were settlers from this country ; and by the exertions which they made in this way from an early period, multitudes have enjoyed the means of religious instruction and salvation who would otherwise have been left totally destitute of them.

When the Secession from the Church of Scotland was first declared, its friends were not under the necessity of proving the leading principles on which their Testimony in favour of the Reformation proceeded. This had been the work of their fathers ; and they were not called to lay again the foundation, when there were few around them who attacked it. Their opponents, while they condemned them for testifying in the way of separation from the established church, went along with them in owning the whole doctrine of the Westminster Confession, the divine right of Presbytery, and even the continued obligation of our National Covenants. The state of matters is now, and has for a considerable time been, very different. All these have been attacked with great keenness from various quarters ; and it no longer remains a matter of doubt or dispute, that the greater part of Seceders themselves have relinquished their adherence to the Reformation cause, and are disposed to call in question those things which were once most surely believed among them. A vindication of these has become more than ever necessary. This, however, is not proposed in these pages. All that I mean is to suggest a few things which may tend to obviate the difficulties of such as still feel attached to the cause, while their minds have been thrown into confusion and embarrassment by the specious and plausible objections which have been confidently advanced against it. And I shall endeavour to do this with all possible succinctness.

One of the most common and startling objections brought forward is that which involves a charge against the Westminster Confession of Faith, as

favourable to persecution for conscience sake, and arming the civil magistrate with a power to punish good and peaceable subjects purely on the ground of their religious opinions and practices. This is a charge which affects all who have owned that Confession, or who declare a simple adherence to it; and among these are many who, it will not be denied, have shown themselves strenuous friends of the rights of conscience, and who were not likely to subscribe any formulary which they had not examined and did not believe. The passage chiefly referred to is in chap. xx. § 4. Let us try if it justifies the charge.

In the second section the doctrine of liberty of conscience is thus laid down: "God alone is Lord of the conscience, and hath left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are in any thing contrary to his word, or beside it in matters of faith or worship. So that to believe such doctrines, or to obey such commandments, is to betray true liberty of conscience and reason also; and the requiring of an implicit faith, and an absolute and blind obedience, is to destroy liberty of conscience and reason also." This is an important doctrine, and necessary to be maintained against the encroachments and unwarrantable claims of every creature, and of rulers both civil and ecclesiastical. May every man then think and speak, and act as he pleases, under the plea that his conscience gives him liberty to do so, or dictates to him that he ought to do so? To guard against this pernicious abuse of the doctrine is the object of what follows in the Confession. In section third, those are condemned who, "upon pretence of Christian liberty, do practise any sin or cherish any lust." The design of section fourth is to guard against the abuse of the doctrine in reference to public authority: "And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God." He who is the Lord of the conscience has also instituted the authorities in church and state; and it would be in the highest degree absurd to suppose that he has planted in the breast of every individual a power to resist, counteract, and nullify his own ordinances. When public and private claims interfere and clash, the latter must give way to the former; and when any lawful authority is proceeding lawfully within its line of duty, it must be understood as possessing a rightful power to remove out of the way everything which necessarily obstructs its progress. The Confession proceeds, accordingly, to state: "And for their publishing of such opinions, or maintaining of such practices as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity, whether concerning faith, worship, or conversation, or to the power of godliness; or such erroneous opinions or practices, as either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the church; they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the church, and by the power of the civil magistrate." Now, this does not say that all who publish such opinions and maintain such practices as are mentioned, may be proceeded against, or punished (if the substitution of this word shall be insisted on) by the civil magistrate; nor does it say, that any good and peaceable subject shall

be made liable to this process simply on the ground of religious opinions published and practices maintained by him. For, in the *first* place, persons of a particular character are spoken of in this paragraph, and these are very different from good and peaceable subjects. They are described in the former sentence as "they who *oppose* lawful power or the lawful exercise of it," and "*resist* the ordinance of God." The same persons are spoken of in the sentence under consideration, as appears from the copulative and relative. It is not said, "*Any one* for publishing," &c., but "they who *oppose* any lawful power, &c. for *their* publishing," &c. In the *second* place, this sentence specifies some of the ways in which these persons may become chargeable with the opposition mentioned, and consequently "*may* be called to account;" but it does not assert that even they must or ought to be prosecuted for every avowed opinion or practice of the kind referred to. All that it necessarily implies is, that they may be found opposing lawful powers or the lawful exercise of them in the things specified, and that they are not entitled to plead a general irresponsibility in matters of that kind: notwithstanding such a plea, "they may be called to account and proceeded against." For, be it observed, it is not the design of this paragraph to state the objects of church censure or civil prosecution: its proper and professed object is to interpose a check on the abuse of liberty of conscience as operating to the prejudice of just and lawful authority. It is not sin *as sin*, but as *scandal*, or injurious to the spiritual interests of Christians, that is the proper object of church censure; and it is not for sins as such, but for *crimes*, that persons become liable to punishment by magistrates. The compilers of the Confession were quite aware of these distinctions, which were then common. Some think that if the process of the magistrate had been limited to offences "*contrary to the light of nature*," it would have been perfectly justifiable; but the truth is, that it would have been so only on the interpretation now given. To render an action the proper object of magistratical punishment, it is not enough that it be contrary to the law of God, whether natural or revealed; it must, in one way or another, strike against the public good of society. He who "provides not for his own, especially those of his own house," sins against "*the light of nature*," as also does he who is "*a lover of pleasures more than of God*;" but there are few who will plead that magistrates are bound to proceed against and punish every idler and belly-god. On the other hand there are opinions and practices "*contrary to the known principles of Christianity*," or grafted upon them, which either in their own nature, or from the circumstances with which they may be clothed, may prove so injurious to the welfare of society in general, or of particular nations, or of their just proceedings, or of lawful institutions established in them, as to subject their publishers and maintainers to warrantable coercion and punishment. As one point to which these may relate, I may mention the external observance and sanctification of the Lord's Day, which can be known only from "*the principles of Christianity*," and is connected with all the particulars specified by the Confession—"faith, worship, conversation, the power of godliness, and the external order and peace of the church." That many other instances of a similar description can be produced, will be denied by no sober-thinking person who is well acquainted with popish tenets and practices, and with those which prevailed among the English sectaries during the sitting of the Westminster Assembly; and he who does not deny

this, cannot be entitled, I should think, upon any principles of fair construction, to fix the stigma of persecution on the passage in question.

In support of the objection under consideration, some have referred to chap. 23 of the Confession, in which it is stated to be the magistrate's duty to "take order that—all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed," &c. But as certain means by which he is to endeavour to effect this end are there mentioned, without one word about coercion or punishment, every person must perceive that that passage gives no occasion for such an inference. Others appeal to passages in the private writings of Presbyterians at the period when the Confession was compiled. But it is evidently unjust to attempt in this way to fasten on a public deed an odious sense which its own language does not natively and necessarily imply. Would all those who wish to make Rutherford's treatise on *Pretended Liberty of Conscience* an authentic interpreter of the passages in question, be willing to make the same use of his treatise on *Spiritual Antichrist* with reference to the doctrine taught by the Confession on the Covenant of Grace? Or, would they be willing that the same use should be made of the writings of individuals in the present day in disputes about the principles of the bodies with which they are connected, before the public or before courts of judicature?

Another objection brought against the Confession is, that it subjects matters purely religious and ecclesiastical to the cognisance of the civil magistrate, and allows him an Erastian power in and over the church. This, if true, would be very strange, considering that the Assembly who compiled it were engaged in a dispute against this very claim with the Parliament under whose protection they sat, and that owing to their steady refusal to concede that power to the state (in which they were supported by the whole body of Presbyterians), the erection of presbyteries and synods in England was suspended. Independently of this important fact, the declarations of the Confession itself are more than sufficient to repel the imputation. It declares "that there is no other head of the church but the Lord Jesus Christ," (chap. 25, § 6), and that He, as King and Head of his church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate. To these officers the keys of the kingdom are committed," (chap. 30, § 1, 2). Yea, the very passage appealed to in support of the objection begins with the following pointed declaration: "The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the keys of the kingdom of heaven," (chap. 23, § 3). "The keys of the kingdom of heaven" include all the power exercised in the church, under Christ its sole King; not only that which is ordinarily exercised in the government of particular congregations and in censuring offenders (chap. 30), but also the power "ministerially to determine controversies of faith, and cases of conscience, to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of his church, to receive complaints in cases of mal-administration, and authoritatively to determine the same," (chap. 31, § 3). The Confession teaches that magistrates cannot warrantably assume to themselves the power of doing these things, and what it adds must be understood in a consistency with this declaration. It is true, that it allots to the magistrate a care of religion, and asserts that "he hath authority, and it is his duty to take order that unity and peace be preserved in the church," &c. But is there no order which he can take for having these things done by the persons and in the way by and in which they ought to be done, without taking

the doing of them into his hand, and thus assuming what does not belong to him? The Confession asserts that there is, and proceeds to say: "For the better effecting whereof¹ he hath power to call synods." And is there any good reason for absolutely denying him this power? When "the unity and peace of the church" are broken and endangered in any country, "the truth of God" is depraved, "blasphemies and heresies" of almost every kind are spreading, "corruptions and abuses in worship" are abounding, and when, the church being disorganised, there is no general authority of an ecclesiastical kind to use means for remedying these evils, may not the civil government of that country warrantably call a synod for that purpose? When the state of the nation, as well as of the church, may be convulsed, and its convulsions may be in a great degree owing to religious disorders, is it not a high duty incumbent on him to take such a step, provided he finds it practicable and advisable? Was not this the state of matters in England when the Westminster Assembly met? Was not the state of matters similar in many respects at the Revolution in Scotland? And may not a crisis of the same kind yet recur? Was there any rational ground to think, at the period of the Westminster Assembly, that such a synod would have met, or, supposing it somehow to have been collected, that it could have continued together until it had finished its business, if it had not been convoked, maintained, and protected, by the Parliament of England? Do many of those who deny the power in question reflect, that they owe those books which they still, in one degree or another, own as the subordinate standards of their ecclesiastical communion, to a synod which was thus convoked? Do they reflect, that by means of them the interests of religion have been promoted to an incalculable degree, "unity and peace preserved in the church," &c. from the period of their compilation down to the present day, in Scotland, in England, in Ireland, and in America? Or, recollecting these things, are they prepared to take the pen and insert their absolute veto—"The civil magistrate—for the better effecting thereof, hath" NOT "power to call synods?" At the same time it may be observed here, as on the former objection, that it is not asserted that the magistrate may exercise this power on all occasions and in all circumstances, or whenever there are any evils of a religious kind to correct. It is sufficient that there may be times and circumstances in which he may warrantably exert this power. It is true that the Confession, in another place, (chap. 31, § 2), is not sufficiently full and explicit in declaring the intrinsic right of the church to convoke synods. But this defect was supplied by the Act of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland receiving and approving of the Confession;² and in the Formula used in the Secession from the beginning an approbation of the Confession is required, "as received" by that Act of Assembly.

After stating that the magistrate has power to call synods, it is added, "to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God." Not to insist here, that these words ought, in fair construction, to be understood of such synods as have been convoked by the magistrate, what reasonable objection can be made to his being present? May he not claim a right to be present at any public meeting within his

¹ "For the better government and further edification of the church, there ought to be such assemblies as are commonly called Synods or Councils; i. e. for attaining the end better than can be accomplished in smaller meetings of church officers." (Conf. chap. 31.)

² See Act of Assembly, prefixed to all our copies of the Confession of Faith. Agreeably to this Act was the Confession ratified by the Parliament of Scotland.

dominions? May he not be present in a synod to witness their proceedings, to preserve their external peace, to redress their grievances, or (why not?) to receive their advice or admonitions? But, if it be supposed that his presence is necessary to give validity to their proceedings, and that he sits as preses of their meeting, or as director of their deliberations and votes, I shall only say that the words of the Confession give not the slightest countenance to such claims, which are utterly inconsistent with the common principles of Presbyterians, and in particular with the well-known and avowed principles of the Church of Scotland. A similar answer may be given to the objection against the last clause of the paragraph. May not any Christian, whatever his station be, "provide that whatsoever is transacted," even in synods, "be according to the mind of God?" If the legislature or government of a nation have a special care about religion, or if there is any particular duty at all which they have to discharge respecting it, and particularly if they have power in any case to call synods, must it not in a special manner be incumbent on them to see to this? Nor does this imply that they are in possession of any ecclesiastical powers, or that they pass a public judgment on true and false religion. Their private judgment is sufficient to regulate them in their public managements in this as well as on many other subjects, about which they exercise their authority, without sustaining themselves as the proper judges of them, as in the case of many, arts, sciences, &c., which they patronise and encourage. Must not Christian rulers, judges, and magistrates provide that "whatsoever is transacted" by themselves, "be according to the mind of God?" Is it not highly fit that they should be satisfied, and that they should by every proper means provide that the determinations of synods be according to the mind of God, if they are afterwards to legalise them, or if they are to use their authority for removing all external obstructions out of the way of their being carried into effect; both of which they may do, without imposing them on the consciences of their subjects? And, in fine, are there not various ways in which they may provide as here stated, without assuming a power foreign to their office, or intruding on the proper business of synods or ecclesiastical courts? But, if it be supposed that the magistrate, as the proper judge in such matters, is to control the deliberations of the ecclesiastical assembly, to prescribe and dictate to them what their decisions shall be, or that, when they have deliberated and decided, he may receive appeals from their decisions, or may bring the whole before his tribunal, and review, alter, and reverse their sentences, I have only to say, as formerly, that the words of the Confession give not the slightest countenance to such claims, which are utterly inconsistent with the common principles of Presbyterians, and in particular with the well-known and avowed principles and contendings of the Church of Scotland.

But though I consider these objections as destitute of a solid foundation, yet, as the construction on which they proceed has often been put on the passages to which they refer, I, for my part, can see no good reason why an explanation should not be given of these passages, or of the doctrine contained in them, with the view of preventing all misconception of the sentiments of those who approve of the Confession; provided the two following things are attended to. In the first place, that this declaration do not fix on the Confession the obnoxious sentiments which are disclaimed. And, in the second place, that it do not, under the cover of general and ambiguous expressions, invalidate or set aside the general doctrine respecting the exercise of civil authority about

religion which is recognised in the Westminster Confession, and in those of all Protestant churches. Explanations of this kind were given in the early papers of the Secession, which are sufficient to show that they entertained no principles favourable to persecution or injurious to the liberties and independence of the church, and that they did not view the Confession as containing such principles.¹

That magistrates are not exempted from all concern about religion in their public and official capacity, and that civil authority ought to be employed, and is capable in different ways of being employed, for the advancement of religion, and, in Christian countries, for the good of the church, is a doctrine, which, in my opinion, is not only true, but of great practical importance. I shall state, as briefly as I can, the grounds on which I consider this doctrine as resting, and the leading explications and qualifications with which it has been received among Presbyterians, and particularly in the Secession. The general doctrine seems equally consonant to the dictates of sound reason, the maxims of good policy, and the uniform tenor and express declarations of Scripture. The obligations and the practice of religion in some degree must be supposed to exist antecedently to the erection of social institutions among mankind. It enters into all the duties and offices of life; and none are at liberty to overlook or be indifferent about its interests in any relation in which they stand, or in reference to any connection which they may form. It is the firmest bond of social union, the most efficient check on power, the strongest security for obedience, the principal source of justice, fidelity, humanity, and all the virtues. In framing their laws, all nations, ancient and modern, have availed themselves of its sanctions, and made provision in one way or another, for that worship which they practised. And the principle on which they acted was expressly recognised, and applied to the true religion, in the only system of national polity that ever was prescribed immediately by Heaven. It would be strange if a people professing Christianity should give the first example of a nation settling its fundamental laws and regulating the administration of its government, without acknowledging the God that is above, making any provision for the maintenance of his honour, or requiring any religious qualifications whatever in those who were to rule over it. It would be stranger still, if it should be argued that Christianity itself requires this, and that it forbids any homage being done to its Founder by national laws, or any service being performed to him by their administrators.

“The public good of outward and common order in all reasonable society, to the glory of God, is the great and only end which those invested with magistracy can propose in a sole respect unto that office.”² This distinguishes their office from that of ministers of the Gospel, which is versant about “the disorders of men’s hearts.” But it does not surely mean, that there is nothing incumbent on magistrates but the employment of physical force in restraining men from committing injuries, or in putting down riots and seditions. The prevention of crimes and disorders is a more important object than their punishment. A right to accomplish any end implies a right to use all the means that are necessary or conducive to the gaining of that end. And of all the means which are calculated to preserve order, to repress crimes, and to promote the public and general good of society, the most powerful beyond all

¹ Act and Testimony, *apud* Display, i. 156—159. And Answers to Nairn, *ibid.* p. 311—314.

² Answers to Nairn, *ut supra*, p. 311.

reasonable doubt is religion. On this ground it becomes one of the first duties of those who are intrusted with the care of the public weal of a nation, to preserve and cherish a sense of religion on the minds of the people at large, and for this purpose to give public countenance and decided encouragement to its institutions. And the more pure and perfect—the more free from imposture, falsehood, error, superstition, and other corruptions—the more certain in its foundation and the more forcible in its motives, that any system of religion is, the higher claims must it have to public countenance, both on the ground of its intrinsic truth and authority, and on account of its superior practical influence and utility. This is not to make religion an engine of state. It is to use it for one of those ends which it is calculated in its own nature to serve, and which its Author intended it should serve: it is to make the ordinances and the institutions of God mutually subservient, and thus to promote in a more extensive way his glory and the good of his creatures. Thus, as it is incumbent on all men to employ every lawful means, in their several stations, for advancing the true religion, the duty of the enlightened and patriotic magistrate, and the duty of the pious and public-spirited Christian who may hold that office, become so far coincident, and a uniform manner of action, according to the complex character which the individual sustains, is produced.

Magistracy is common to mankind at large, whether living within or without the church. It supposes them capable of religion, and practising it in some shape under the moral government of God ; but as it is founded on natural principles and on the moral law (which was prior to the Christian faith, and more extensively known), it would be absurd to suppose that it was instituted by the Mediator, or that it has the supernatural things peculiar to Christianity for its direct and proper object. “As the whole institution and end of the office are cut out by and lie within the compass of natural principles, it were absurd to suppose that there could or ought to be any exercise thereof towards its end, in the foresaid circumstances, but what can be argued for and defended from natural principles: as, indeed, there is nothing especially allotted and allowed to magistrates by the Word of God and the Confessions of the Reformed Churches, but what can be so.”¹ This establishes the power in question on its proper and broadest basis, as extending to natural religion, whether more imperfectly understood without revelation, or more fully explained in the Bible. But then it is to be observed, that religion and morality in all the extent to which they were contained in the law of nature, are taken into the system of Christianity. There is—there can be—no such thing as a distinct profession or practice of natural religion in Christian countries. And, consequently, there could be no objects of a religious kind, in such countries, about which magistratical power could be employed, unless it were to regard them as existing in the constitution of the Christian church, and see to the observance of them as enforced by immediate divine authority, and connected with supernatural mysteries. To deny, therefore, that civil rulers have a right to do this, would be to represent the Gospel as making void instead of establishing the law, and as invalidating that authority and abridging those powers, which the God of nature had instituted and conferred for the wisest and most beneficial purposes. When duly and wisely employed about the external concerns of the church, as a visible society erected in the world, so as to be

¹ Answers to Nairn, *ut supra*.

really serviceable to her interests, civil authority becomes doubly a blessing to a people, and as such it was repeatedly promised to Christian nations in the prophetic scriptures both of the Old and New Testament. But in this case there is no addition of power to magistracy, but merely an application of its common power, under the direction of its original general law, to a particular object, which is brought under its cognisance in some periods and places of the world. The kingdom of Christ, though not *of* is *in* this world ; as externally set up among men it is entitled to all the support and countenance which any ordinance of God can give it ; and as its spirituality does not render it incapable of being injured by the kingdoms of this world, so neither does it render it incapable of being benefited by them. Church and state are essentially distinct and independent of each other. But kingdoms and powers which are independent may surely maintain a friendly alliance ; they may assist and support each other ; and, although the one cannot make laws which are binding on the other, yet they may make laws which both tend and are intended for mutual advantage. Presbyterians have stated with as great clearness as those of any other denomination—I may safely say, with greater clearness—the divine origin, the independence, the spirituality, the heavenly constitution of the kingdom of Christ, and its distinction from secular kingdoms in its laws, administration, subjects, offices, judicatories, and special ends. But in perfect consistency with all this, they have maintained that civil and ecclesiastical societies may sustain friendly relations ; that they may be helpful to each other, that they may have certain common objects about which both may be employed in a distinct manner, and a common end beside that which is peculiar to each ; that the co-operation of temporal and spiritual power may be necessary for introducing or securing a public reformation of religion, when it is opposed by violence, or when a corrupt system has established itself in all the departments of society ; and that civil authority, in ordinary times, may be exerted in securing and preserving the church in the peaceable, full, and permanent enjoyment of her peculiar liberties, government, and institutions. A civil establishment of a particular religion or church does not necessarily imply a power of legislating to the faith and consciences of Christians : nor an imposing of matters purely religious or of supernatural things as such, by civil penalties ; nor a depriving of subjects of their natural and civil privileges simply on the ground of their dissent. Besides, there are various ways in which religion may be an object of public attention, and be encouraged by those who are in civil authority, supreme, and subordinate, without their attempting to establish a particular system, which, in many cases, would be impracticable or highly improper ; as when the mass of the people may be grossly ignorant of Christianity or superstitiously attached to a corrupt form of it, or when a nation may be greatly divided in their religious opinions and practice.

But it is not the design of these pages to enlarge on this subject. Before dismissing it, however, I have two general remarks to make. In the first place, it is, to say the least, extremely inadvertent to represent this as a subject of mere speculation, on which Christians are called to form no opinion. Not to specify here the various practical lights in which the question may be viewed, it may be sufficient to mention, that national laws and their administration, whether in favour of a true or a false religion, have always had, and must have, great influence upon the opinions and conduct of the mass of the people.

Religious establishments exist in our own country, and are daily productive of good or evil : we must either approve or condemn them in whole, or we must do so in part ; but how can we do either, if we have no formed principles on the subject ? In the second place, it is still more unreasonable to hold out that this is a matter of mere speculation to Seceders. After the statement that has been given of their principles ;—after their express approbation of the national covenants, of the Westminster Confession, of the civil reformation of Scotland, and the laws establishing the Protestant and Presbyterian religion ;—after their condemnation of the rescission of these laws at the Restoration ;—after their pointed censures of the Revolution-settlement on such grounds as the following, that “ Prelacy is never considered as contrary to the Word of God—nor our Presbyterian church-government and discipline as what the land is bound and obliged to maintain by the most solemn oaths and covenants ;—and all the legal securities given to this church, in that covenanting period from 1638 to 1650, are overlooked and passed by ;”¹—and after having made their testimony on these heads the matter of a solemn vow and oath, it surely cannot be maintained that they have no immediate or practical interest in the doctrine which teaches that civil authority may be warrantably employed about matters of religion and relating to the church. The truth is, that this doctrine is not only necessarily implied in their religious profession, but it will be found running through the whole of it, so that it is impossible to separate the one from the other without disordering and taking in pieces the entire system. I do not mean by this, that they must decide and be agreed upon all the questions that have been or may be started on this subject ; this would be absurd in reference to ecclesiastical power, and much more so as to civil. All that is required is, that they hold those general principles on this head of doctrine which are implied in, or are necessary to support, the express approvals of the national reformation, and condemnations of the national deformation, which formed so prominent a part of their public profession, and by which they were from the first distinguished as Seceders.

It will not be expected that I should enter here into an examination of the accusations brought against Presbyterians as chargeable with intolerant and persecuting proceedings during the period of the Solemn League. I confine myself to the following general observations. In the *first* place, Seceders never pledged themselves by an approbation of all the acts and proceedings either of the state or of the church during that period. Their approbation of them was limited.² So far as it can be shown that any acts of the church encroached on due Christian liberty, or that any acts of the state subjected good and peaceable subjects to punishment for matters purely religious, or imposed on them hardships which did not necessarily result from measures requisite to promote the public good and preserve the national safety, the principles of Seceders do not permit them to justify the conduct of the covenanters.

In the *second* place, the charges on this head are in some instances groundless, and in others greatly exaggerated. The fact is, that this period of the history of Britain has been most grossly misrepresented, and erroneous and distorted views of the great transactions by which it was distinguished, and of the

¹ Act and Testimony, *ut supra*, p. 86—87. Acknowledgment of Sins, *ib.* p. 230. Answers to Nairn, *ib.* p. 286—287.

² Act and Testimony, *ut supra*, p. 62. Answers to Nairn, *ib.* p. 233.

characters and actions of the men who were principally engaged in them have at last become general, and, in some points, almost universal.¹ By the most the nature of the cause in which the covenanters were embarked, the enemies by whom they were opposed, and the dangers with which they were surrounded, are not understood or not duly adverted to. The work to which they were called did not consist in the correction of simple errors in doctrine, or corruptions which merely affected worship, ecclesiastical discipline, and Christian morals. It had for its object the removal of evils which were hurtful both in a religious and political view, and by which the liberties of church and state were equally affected. Prelacy was not only a deviation from the institution of Christ, which was to be confuted and removed by an appeal to scriptural authority and argument; but secular power, external violence, and political tyranny were annexed to it, and interwoven with the whole form and proceedings of the hierarchy. Bishops were not only domineering lords in the church; they were also tools in the hands of arbitrary monarchs and persecuting statesmen. Again, these evils were owing in a great measure to the exorbitant prerogative of the crown, from which, in consequence of the ecclesiastical supremacy vested in it, arose the arbitrary proceedings of the bishops' courts, and the illegal powers of the High Commission. While the ecclesiastical grievances sprung from political abuses, the political grievances might be traced in their turn to ecclesiastical abuses; and religion and policy equally demanded the correction of both. A co-operation of the several powers, and of the means competent to them, was therefore requisite. The use of religious means was primarily needful for giving life and animation to the work; but these alone could not redress all grievances. Means of a very different kind were necessary to restrain violence, to curb tyranny, to abolish the laws authorising the evils complained of, and to substitute others in their place. If forcible opposition was made to this, or if conspiracies and factions were formed for the maintenance or restitution of the old oppressive system, it was necessary to employ law and penalties for restraining or suppressing

¹ I cannot help saying, that Presbyterians have shown themselves strangely negligent in counteracting these false views; and I wish I had no reason for adding, that they have suffered for their supineness by becoming the dupes of misrepresentation. Mr Neal's History of the Puritans, a work which has been extensively read, affords a striking exemplification of this. Examinations of it, or counter-statements in those instances in which they considered their connections as injured by the author, have been published by Episcopalians, Baptists, Quakers, and Socinians. Nothing of this kind has appeared from Presbyterians, although it might easily be shown that they had as much ground for complaint as any of the parties mentioned. The general merits of that work should have been an inducement to them to point out its mistakes, which were more readily credited than the grosser errors of less informed and more prejudiced writers.

I can only give one instance here. After stating the Presbyterian opinion concerning "the power of the keys," or of church-government, he adds: "The Independents claimed a like power for the brotherhood of

every particular congregation, *but without any civil sanctions or penalties annexed.*" Hist. of Puritans, vol. iii. p. 266. Toulmin's edit. Now, the annexation of civil penalties did not enter into the claim of the Presbyterians, in their disputes in favour of the divine right of church-government in general, or of Presbytery. But, if it had entered into their claim (as I grant some of them in their writings vindicated the propriety of the annexation), still it would have formed no distinction between them and the Independents; the latter themselves being judges. "If the Magistrate's power (to which *we give as much*, and, as we think, MORE than the principles of the Presbyterian government will suffer them to yield) do but assist and back the sentence of other churches denouncing this non-communion against churches miscarrying, according to the nature of the crime, as they judge meet—then, without all controversy this our way of church proceeding will be every way as effectual as their other can be supposed to be," &c. Apologetical Narration by the five Dissenting Members of the Assembly of Divines, p. 18.

such attempts. In conducting any common measures having for their object the general good of society, civil or ecclesiastical, it is impossible altogether to avoid interfering with private liberty, or subjecting individuals to hardships and restraints which in some way affect their consciences and the full enjoyment of their religious privileges. Undeniable examples of this in recent times might be produced from the proceedings of religious societies which have no immediate connection with government. In the prosecution of the complex reformation in which our forefathers were engaged, opposed, as it was, by such adversaries as we have described, and while an intestine war raged in the country, it was not only extremely difficult for them to steer an even course, but it was impossible for them to avoid imposing restraints which would have been improper in an ordinary state of affairs; and tenderness apart, we ought to be cautious in censuring their conduct, as it may turn out, on an accurate knowledge of all the facts, that measures which at first view appeared intolerant or unreasonably severe were indispensably necessary to the public safety. Nor should we overlook the character and designs of the sectaries, who rose on the suppression of the arbitrary and malignant party; and whose claims on the head of liberty of conscience were resisted, by men decidedly averse to the use of force in religious matters, as dangerous to the religion, liberties, and peace of the three kingdoms.¹ If the state of parties and the circumstances of the time be narrowly investigated, it will appear, I think, that the public proceedings, so far from being obnoxious to the charge of persecution, were upon the whole marked with uncommon lenity and tenderness, even amidst open war and the plots and cabals of factions, political and religious; and that that period, instead of being distinguished by restrictions on opinions and practices, was rather noted for the relaxation of ecclesiastical discipline and penal laws, and for a more licentious freedom and greater diversity of religion than ever prevailed in any period of British history.

In the *third* place, the most exceptionable acts and proceedings took place in consequence of the rejection of those salutary measures which the Presbyterians had advised. Suffice it to state here, that, in consequence of the opposition of the Independents on the one hand, and the Erastians on the other, the settlement of ecclesiastical government and discipline, according to the plan agreed on by the Westminster Assembly, was delayed from time to time, and ultimately refused by the Parliament of England. In this disorganised state of the church, disorders of various kinds took place, innumerable sects sprung up, and errors and blasphemies, formerly unheard of, and shocking to Christian ears, were everywhere propagated. Alarmed at these appearances, and seeing matters fast tending to anarchy and confusion in the nation, the Parliament took the affair into their own hands, and published an ordinance intended to check and punish these evils. The Presbyterians by their declarations and petitions may be brought in as accessory to this measure; but it ought not to be forgotten that they had predicted the consequences which would arise from the dilatory proceedings of parliament; that they had uniformly testified an earnest desire to have religious errors and disorders corrected by spiritual means; and had avowed their conviction, that a scriptural discipline, if erected and allowed freely to exert itself,

¹ See the Lives of Gataker and Lightfoot, in *Biographia Britannica*, vol. iv. p. 2166; vol. v. p. 3293.

would accomplish that desirable end, without the interposition of any secular violence.¹

The last class of objections to which I propose adverting is that which relates to the Solemn League and Covenant. It will not be expected that I should say anything here in the way of direct answer to those who find fault with the matter of that deed, or who deny the lawfulness and binding force of all covenants about matters of religion. The following considerations may perhaps tend to obviate some of the difficulties which are felt respecting the form, enactment, and obligation of the Solemn League. Covenants and oaths are of the same general nature, and retain their proper and primary design, by whomsoever they are employed, and to whatever purposes they may be applied. Their lawfulness, utility, and obligation are recognised among all people, and recourse has been had to them on all great occasions that required their interposition. Revelation teaches more explicitly, and corroborates their warrants and obligations, discovers new objects about which they may be employed, and gives directions as to the proper manner of performing these and other acts of moral duty. It expressly ascertains their use and application to moral and religious purposes, as well as to the ordinary affairs of human society. There is a law of morality and religion common to men; and the use of these bonds of fidelity in the peculiar concerns of Christians, or of ecclesiastical societies, does not abolish or supersede their use for any other lawful purpose. The Gospel neither adds any essential duties to the law, nor confines it within narrower limits as to persons or objects. Covenants and oaths are sacred in themselves, independently of the matter of them. In respect of their matter and immediate end they may be civil, political, or ecclesiastical, or they may be of a mixed kind, in which objects of a different nature are combined for the better attaining of some great purpose of public good; they may be private or public; spontaneous, and about matters to which persons were not previously bound, or framed and enjoined by authority; more general or particular; more extensive or limited; temporary or perpetual. They may formally consist in mutual stipulations between individuals or bodies of men, or they may consist in

¹ In a work published two years before the time now referred to, Mr Baillie made the following striking declaration: "Now, indeed, every monster walks in the street without controlment, while all ecclesiastic government is cast asleep; this too long inter-reign and mere anarchy hath invited every unclean creature to creep out of its cave, and show in publick its misshapen face to all who like to behold. But if once the government of Christ were set up amongst us, as it is in the rest of the reformed churches, we know not what would impede it, by the sword of God alone, *without any secular violence*, to banish out of the land these spirits of error, in all meekness, humility, and love, by the force of truth convincing and satisfying the minds of the seduced. Episcopal courts were never fitted for the reclaiming of minds; their prisons, their fines, their pillories, their nose-slittings, their ear-cuttings, their cheek-burnings, did but hold down the flame to break out in season with the greater rage. But the reformed Presbytery doth proceed in a spiritual method evidently fitted for the gaining of hearts. It is not prophecy, but

a rational prediction bottomed upon reasons and multiplied experience: Let England once be countenanced by her superior powers, to enjoy the just and necessary liberty of consistories for congregations, of presbyteries for counties, of synods for larger shires, and national assemblies for the whole land, as Scotland hath long possessed these by the unanimous consent of king and parliament, without the least prejudice to the civil state, but to the evident and confessed benefit thereof; or as the very Protestants in France, by the concession of a popish state and king, have enjoyed all these four spiritual courts the last fourscore years and above: Put these holy and divine instruments in the hand of the Church of England, by the blessing of God thereupon, the sore and great evil of so many heresies and schisms shall quickly be cured, which now not only troubles the peace and welfare, but hazards the very subsistence both of church and kingdom: *without this mean, the State will toil itself in vain about the cure of such spiritual diseases.*" Baillie's Dissuasive from the Errors of the Time, pref. pp. 7, 8.

a common engagement to God, which is the strongest and most solemn way in which men can become bound to one another. They may relate to the intrinsic affairs of a church, or to the external state and interests of churches and nations. Any of these are lawful and obligatory when entered into on a due call and on proper grounds. All the temporal and common affairs of men are capable of a religious direction and use, and may be subordinated to the great ends of advancing the divine glory and spiritual interests. No duties, moral or religious, can be acceptably performed but by those who are acquainted with the Gospel and instated in the covenant of grace; but this must not be confounded with their warrants and obligations. Of covenanting considered as a public duty performed by Christians solely in their ecclesiastical capacity—of the distinction between it and those engagements, virtual or actual, which are constitutive of churches or of church membership,—of the distinction between it and the act of faith which brings persons to an interest in the covenant of grace, and ought not to be viewed as a promise of fidelity or engagement either to God or man—of the additional formality and solemn sanctions which discriminate it from that open profession of interest in God and obedience to Him which is in some way made by all believers and in all churches—and of the special reasons and calls for these high sanctions and pledges,—I do not propose here to speak.

All the noted covenants and leagues in which the interests of the Reformation throughout Europe were so deeply concerned, were of a mixed kind. They contained engagements on the part of the confederates to defend one another in the profession of the Protestant religion, or in throwing off the authority of Rome, and correcting abuses, which were partly religious and partly political. They were entered into by public men, in their several secular capacities, as well as religious, and even by corporate bodies. Such was the League of Smalcald, of the Swiss Cantons, and of the Evangelic Body in Germany; and the Covenants of the Protestant princes and towns in France, and in the Netherlands. Such also were the National Covenants in Britain. The Solemn League was a complex deed, both in its form and in its matter. It was not only a covenant with God, but also between people and people, for reciprocal benefit, and on certain mutual terms: security was stipulated on the one part and aid on the other, in the prosecution of its great objects. Religion formed the great and principal matter of it, but the promoting of this was not its sole object. National reformation and uniformity were combined with national liberty, safety, peace, loyalty, and law. It was adapted to "the dangerous, distressed, and deplorable estate" of the three "kingdoms," as well as of the "churches" in them. It was not, therefore, a mere church-covenant, but was framed, sworn, enjoined, and promoted by the public authorities of both church and state.

Some condemn this as an improper blending of heterogeneous matter, and think that our ancestors ought to have framed two separate covenants—one in defence of their civil liberties, and another for religious purposes. If those who express this opinion will make the trial, I apprehend they will find in it articles (and these not the least important), which they will be unable to dispose of, without making a third covenant, to be taken by all, or else adding them to each of the two, as equally pertaining to both. In either way they will inevitably plunge into what they call the old error of blending. There were peculiar duties which those in civil, and even in military stations, owed respect-

ing the articles which were of a religious complexion ; and, *vice versa*, there were duties which ministers of the Gospel and church courts owed respecting those which were civil, political, or military. The truth is, there is no article in the Solemn League that is either purely civil, or purely religious. The civil things in it were connected with the religious, and the religious bore a relation to the national state and policy at that time. An accurate acquaintance with the circumstances in which our ancestors were placed, will, I presume, fully justify the measure they adopted, and show that they acted with the greatest wisdom, when they embodied in one common engagement to God and among themselves those things which Providence had joined together, and thus secured the vigorous and combined exertions of the friends of religion and liberty in a cause that was common to both. Nor did this imply any undue blending of things which, though connected, are in their nature distinct, nor any confounding of the constitution and powers of church and state, or of the respective offices and duties of the covenanters. It may just as well be said (to make use of a familiar comparison), that, when a mason and carpenter enter into a joint contract to finish a building, there is a confusion of trades, and that the one is to labour in the occupation of the other, instead of doing each his own work, and providing what is common to both. To separate the civil part of the covenant from the religious, and judge of it piecemeal, is to proceed on a fanciful supposition of something that never had an existence. As one complex and undivided whole was it framed, enacted, sworn, promoted ; and as one whole must it be judged, and stand or fall.

The manner in which the covenant was enjoined to be taken in Scotland—"under all civil pains," has not been approved by Seceders in any of their public papers. Private writers of their connection who have vindicated the injunction-clause, have not considered it as extending beyond exclusion from places of power and trust. Whatever may be the legal import of the phrase, I believe this interpretation accords with the fact ; and, so far as I know, it cannot be shown, that, with the consent and approbation of the public authorities, the covenant was forced upon any, or that the loss of liberty or of goods was incurred by them for simply refusing it. I frankly confess that I have not yet seen any good reason, in point of religion, justice, or good policy, for condemning the exclusion of those who did not take the Solemn League from places of authority and public trust. It was the great bond of union, and test of fidelity, among those who were embarked in that cause in defence of which the Parliaments had already drawn their swords. A due regard to the high interests which were at stake, as well as their own safety and the maxims of prudence by which all people are guided in similar circumstances, required that they should carefully distinguish between those who were well or ill affected to their cause, and that they should not intrust the more active management and defence of it to such as were of the latter description. In the extraordinary circumstances in which they were placed, a mixed test, partly civil and partly religious, became so far necessary to ascertain common friends and foes. There might be (I have no doubt there were) individuals peaceably disposed, and even friendly to the cause of the Parliaments, so far as civil liberty was concerned, who yet scrupled at the stipulations in the covenant which related to religion. But laws cannot be made for individuals ; it belonged to the public authorities to determine what description of persons it was safe, in the

peculiar circumstances, to intrust with power ; and in times of national confusion, danger, and war, when all that is valuable to a people may be put in jeopardy, individuals may be required to forego, or may be restricted in the exercise of those rights which, in an ordinary and quiet state of society, they may be entitled to claim. The vindicating of such tests in certain times, and in reference to certain parties, does not apply an approval of them in times or in reference to parties of a very different description.

The continued obligation of our National Covenants is of greater importance than any particular measure adopted in prosecuting them. In what I have to say on this branch of the subject, I shall keep the Solemn League more particularly in eye, both because it comprehends the substance of the National Covenant of Scotland, and because it has been the object of more frequent attack. It is not every lawful covenant, nor even every lawful covenant of a public nature, that is of permanent obligation. Some of both kinds, from their very nature or from other circumstances, may undoubtedly be temporary. The permanent obligation of the Solemn League results from the permanency of its nature and design, and of the parties entering into it, taken in connection with the public capacity in which it was established. Some talk of it as it were a mere temporary expedient to which our forefathers had recourse in defending their civil and religious liberties ; and, when they have paid a compliment to it in this point of view, they think they have no more concern with the matter. This is a very narrow and mistaken view of the deed. The most momentous transactions, and most deeply and durably affecting the welfare and the duty of nations and of churches, may be traced to the influence of the extraordinary and emergent circumstances of a particular period. The emergency which led to the formation of the covenant is one thing, and the obligation of that covenant is quite another : the former might quickly pass away, while the latter may be permanent and perpetual. Nor is the obligation of the covenant to be determined by the temporary or changeable nature of its subordinate and accessory articles. Whatever may be said of some of the things engaged to in the Solemn League, there cannot be a doubt that in its great design and leading articles it was not temporary but permanent. Though the objects immediately contemplated by it—religious reformation and uniformity—had been accomplished, it would still have continued to oblige those who were under its bond to adhere to and maintain these attainments. But unhappily there is no need of having recourse to this line of argument : its grand stipulations remain to this day unfulfilled. The Solemn League was a national covenant and oath, in every point of view,—in its matter, its form, the authority by which it was enjoined, the capacities in which it was sworn, and the manner in which it was ratified. It was a sacred league between kingdom and kingdom with respect to their religious as well as their secular interests, and at the same time a covenant in which they jointly swore to God to perform all the articles contained in it. National religion, national safety, liberty and peace, were the great objects which it embraced. It was not a mere agreement or confederation (however solemn) of individuals or private persons (however numerous) entering spontaneously and of their own accord into a common engagement. It was framed and concluded by the representatives of kingdoms in concurrence with those of the church ; it was sworn by them in their public capacity ; at their call and by their authority, it was afterwards sworn by the body of the people in their different ranks and orders ; and finally, it was ratified and pronounced valid by laws both civil and

ecclesiastical. The public faith was thus plighted by all the organs through which a nation is accustomed to express its mind and will. Nothing was wanting to complete the national tie, and to render it permanent; unless it should be maintained that absolute unanimity is necessary, and that a society cannot contract lawful engagements to God or man, as long as there are individuals who oppose and are dissentient. Sanctions less sacred, and pledges less numerous, would have given another nation, or even an individual, a perfect right to demand from Britain the fulfilment of any treaty or contract; and shall not God, who was not only a witness but the principal party, and whose honour and interests were immediately concerned in this transaction, have a like claim?—or shall we “break the covenant and escape?”

Some of the principles on which it has been attempted to loose this sacred tie, are so opposite to the common sentiments of mankind, that it is not necessary to refute them; such as, that covenants, vows, and oaths, cannot superadd any obligation to that which we are previously under by the law of God; and, that their obligation on posterity consists merely in the influence of example. There is another objection which is of a more specious kind and lays claim to greater accuracy, but which on examination will be found both unsolid and inaccurate. It is pleaded, that it is only in the character of church-members that persons can enter into religious covenants or be bound by them; and that the covenants of this country can be called national, on no other ground than because the majority of the inhabitants, in their individual character, voluntarily entered into them. At present I can only state some general considerations tending to show the fallacy of this view of the subject. By church-members may be meant either those who are in actual communion with a particular organised church, or those who stand in a general relation to the church universal; but in neither of these senses can it be said that religious covenants or bonds are incompetent or non-obligatory in every other character. This is to restrict the authority of the divine law in reference to moral duties, and to limit the obligations which result from it, in a way that is not warranted either by Scripture or reason. How can that which is founded on the moral law, and which is moral-natural, not positive, be confined to church-members, or to Christians in the character of church-members only? The doctrine in question is also highly objectionable, as it unduly restricts the religious character of men, and the sphere of their action about religious matters, whether viewed as individuals or as formed into societies and communities. They are bound to act for the honour of God, and are capable of contracting sacred obligations (sacred both in their nature and in their objects) in all the characters and capacities which they sustain. I know no good reason for holding, that when a company of men or a society act about religion, or engage in religious exercises, they are thereby converted into a church, or act merely and properly as church-members. Families are not churches, nor are they constituted properly for a religious purpose; yet they have a religious character, and are bound to act according to it in honouring and serving God, and are capable of contracting religious obligations. Nations also have a religious character, and may act about the affairs of religion. They may make their profession of Christianity, and legally authorise its institutions, without being turned into a church; and why may they not also come under an oath and covenant with reference to it, which shall be nationally binding? Covenanting may be said to be by a nation as brought into a church-state, acting in this religious capacity—the oath may be dispensed by ministers of the

Gospel, and accompanied by the usual exercises of religion in the church, and yet it may not be an ecclesiastical deed. The marriage-covenant and vow is founded on the original law, and its duties, as well as the relation which it establishes, are common to men, and of a civil kind. Yet among Christians it is mixed with religious engagements, and celebrated religiously in the church. Ministers of the Gospel officiate in dispensing the vow, and accompany it with the word and prayer. The parties are bound to marry in the Lord, and to live together as Christians. But is the marriage vow on that account ecclesiastical, or do the parties engage as church-members only? The Christian character is, in such cases, combined with the natural, domestic, civil, political. Much confusion also arises on this subject from not attending to the specific object of our National Covenants, and the nature of their stipulations, by which they are distinguished from mere church-covenants. I shall only add that several objections usually adduced on this head may be obviated by keeping in mind, that the obligation in question is of a moral kind, and that God is the principal party who exacts the fulfilment of the bond.

If there is any truth in the statements that have now been made, the question respecting the obligation of the British covenants is deeply interesting to the present generation. The identity of a nation, as existing through different ages, is, in all moral respects, as real as the identity of an individual through the whole period of his life. The individuals that compose it, like the particles of matter in the human body, pass away and are succeeded by others; but the body politic continues essentially the same. If Britain contracted a moral obligation, in virtue of a solemn national covenant for religion and reformation, that obligation must attach to her until it has been discharged. Have the pledges given by the nation been yet redeemed? Do not the principal stipulations in the covenant remain unfulfilled at this day? Are we not as a people still bound by that engagement to see these things done? Has the lapse of time cancelled the bond? Or, will a change of sentiments and views set us free from its tie? Is it not the duty of all the friends of reformation to endeavour to keep alive a sense of this obligation on the public mind? But, although all ranks and classes in the nation should lose impressions of it, and although there should not be a single religious denomination, nor even a single individual, in the land, to remind them of it, will it not be held in remembrance by One, with whom "a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years?"

By this time the reader must be aware of the general opinion which I entertain of the basis on which the two largest Synods of the Secession have lately united. It is not my intention to enter into any particular examination of the articles of that agreement. Complexly taken, they afford undeniable proof of a complete recession from the ground originally occupied by Seceders. The exception made to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Catechisms, is expressed in such a way as to leave on them the imputation of teaching persecuting principles in matters of religion, and in such a way as to set aside, or to throw loose, the whole doctrine which they teach respecting the exercise of magistratical authority about these matters. Besides, the united Synod merely "retain" these books, "as (to use their own words) the confession of our faith, expressive of the sense in which we understand the Holy Scriptures;" but do not receive them, as was formerly done by the Church of Scotland and in the Secession, under the consideration of their being subordinate standards of uniformity for the three nations. The other

standards, the Westminster "Form of Church-government," and "Directory," are entirely excluded from the Basis. The general statement on the head of Presbyterian government is chargeable with ambiguity, and, unless inadvertency be pleaded, is evasive. The expression of veneration for our Reforming ancestors, and of a warm sense of the value of their efforts "in the cause of civil and religious liberty," I have no doubt, is "unfeigned;" and the approval of "the method adopted by them for mutual excitement and encouragement by solemn confederation and vows to God," is so far good. But I must be allowed to add, that this is saying no more than has been often said, by those friends of civil and religious liberty whose system of religion was very opposite to that of our Reforming ancestors; and that it is a very poor substitute for that explicit approbation of, and adherence to, the Covenanted Reformation of Britain which Seceders formerly avouched. This is all that the United Synod have to say respecting our National Covenants; they "approve of the method adopted—by solemn confederation and vows to God;" but they have not a word to say on the present or continued obligation of these vows. For, surely, it was not expected that the public would consider this as included in the following declaration: "We acknowledge that we are under high obligations to maintain and promote the work of Reformation begun, and to a great extent carried on by them." Nothing, in fact, could be more disgraceful to these covenants than to attempt to bring them in under the cover of such an expression: and, after the open, decided, express, and repeated avowals of the perpetual obligation of the National Covenant of Scotland and the Solemn League and Covenant of the three kingdoms, in the former profession, and in the Ordination-formula, of the two bodies now composing the Union, the omission of everything of this kind, and the careful exclusion of the very names of these covenants, can be viewed in no other light than a practical renunciation of their obligation, and a rescinding of all former declarations in favour of it. If the United Synod were the same with the original Seceding body, how severely would they condemn themselves by the charge which they once and again brought against the Established Church after the Revolution, because "they did not, by any particular act of Assembly, assert the obligation of our Covenants, National and Solemn League, and their binding force upon posterity?"¹ On the provision made by the articles for the practice of covenanting, I have only to observe, that this exercise was all along viewed, in that part of the Secession by which it was observed, as the most solemn mode of sealing the common profession of the whole body; that as such it was engaged in at the express call of the supreme judicatory; and that, when the United Synod cannot say that "the circumstances of Providence require it," I can scarcely persuade myself that it is seriously contemplated to practise this sacred service in a manner which would discredit it, and which is totally irreconcilable with Presbyterian principles.² With respect to the religious clause in some Burgess oaths which occasioned the original strife, the preamble to the Basis supposes that there are some "towns where it may still exist;" and all the provision it makes with respect to this is, that "both Synods agree to use what may appear to them the most proper means for obtaining the abolition" of it. No provision is made, that, if they shall be

¹ Act and Testimony, in Display, i. 90. Acknowledgment of Sins, ib. 231.

² Formerly sessions were left to determine when the performance of the duty was suitable to the circumstances of their respective

congregations; but now they must determine whether Providence is requiring the duty, or, in other words, whether it be at all a duty incumbent on the church in the present times.

unsuccessful in their applications for an abolition of it, the oath shall not be taken in the united society ; although it is well known that one of the parties had all along maintained that Seceders involved themselves in contradiction by swearing it, and continued, down to the time of the Union, to require all intrants to public office among them to declare their solemn approbation of an act condemning it in this point of view. They are thus involved in a judicial allowance of what they hold to be sinful ; and have recognised a principle which may be applied to an indefinite extent, and which ought to have been guarded against with the utmost care, as it enters into all the loose plans of communion which are so fashionable in the present day. This is still more evident from the engagement which they have come under, that they “ shall carefully abstain from agitating in future the questions which occasioned ” the separation. It is proposed that the United Synod shall prepare a Testimony, “ containing the substance of the Judicial Act and Testimony, the Act concerning the Doctrine of Grace, and the Answers to Nairn’s Reasons of dissent.” What some may understand by *the substance*, it may be difficult to say ; but if the proposed Testimony really contain the substance of the first and last named of these papers, the basis will not support the superstructure. In answer to all this, some will say, we are at full liberty to hold all our principles as formerly. But such persons should remember, that the question is not about *their* principles, but the principles, or rather the public profession of the body ; and that it has been chiefly by means of the latter, that the declarative glory of God has been promoted in every age, and his truths and cause preserved and transmitted to posterity.

It is painful to me to be obliged to speak in this manner of the terms of a union, which it would have filled my heart with delight to see established on a solid and scriptural foundation. But in such cases there is a duty incumbent on all the friends of the cause of the Reformation and the Secession : and this they must discharge whatever it may cost them, and regardless of the obloquy that they may hereby incur. They are sacredly bound to adhere to that cause, to confess it, and, according to the calls of Providence, to appear openly in its defence. It cannot but be grieving to them to find that the attempt made to heal the breach among its professed friends, has discovered that disaffection to it existed to a greater extent than they could have imagined. They may be accused as the enemies of peace and union. But they have this consolation, that they still occupy that ground on which their fathers displayed a faithful testimony for the truths and laws of Christ against prevailing defection ; and that they are adhering, without any reservation, or any mark of dissent, to that testimony, and to those books of public authority which were formerly agreed on for settling and preserving religious unity and communion on the most extended scale. And they are encouraged to maintain this ground by the hope which they still cherish, that the God of their fathers and of their vows, will yet, in his merciful providence, bring round a time of reformation ; and that, when this period shall have arrived, the Westminster Standards may form a rallying-point around which the scattered friends of religion, in this land, shall meet, and again happily combine.

S E R M O N S.



ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION.

A CONSIDERABLE number of the following Sermons were transcribed by the lamented Author from his notes for the pulpit, some years before his death. Though often solicited to publish them, he was prevented, by other avocations, from completing the proposed volume. The remaining Discourses have been selected from his manuscripts, and the whole has been arranged with as much attention to order as the nature of the subjects would admit. In the task of selection the Editor has been guided chiefly by the state of preparation in which the notes were found, though in some measure also by the earnestly expressed desires of those who heard them delivered. In one or two instances, what occupied two Discourses in the delivery has been put into one. The judicious reader will be prepared to expect, in a series of Discourses on topics nearly allied to each other, and of a strain almost uniformly practical, an occasional coincidence of sentiment and phraseology; and he will understand the feelings which have restrained the Editor from attempting such alterations as might have been expected from the Author.

With regard to the reception of those Sermons which were prepared by the Author's own hand, the Editor has no right to pretend uneasiness. It is, however, with no small degree of anxiety that he presents along with these the other Discourses which fill the volume. Well knowing the extreme care which his late revered father was accustomed to bestow on all his compositions intended for the public eye, he feels as if he had presumed too far on the silence of the grave, by publishing what the Author would never have given to the world, in such an

imperfect form, during his lifetime. There is some relief in the reflection, that what it might have been unworthy of the living Author to bequeath as a gift, it may be permitted us to present as a memorial ; and to those, at least, who enjoyed his ministrations, the value of these relics of their departed minister may be enhanced by that very absence of finish which may be found to distinguish them from the other Sermons in the volume.

To those who have expressed a wish to see a volume of his father's Lectures printed, the Editor begs to intimate that they have been left in such a state as might warrant the publication of a select number, and that if they should still be called for, he shall commence the preparation of them for the press as speedily as his other engagements will allow. In closing his present task, it is his humble trust that these Sermons, with all the disadvantages under which they necessarily labour, may be pronounced, as a whole, not unworthy of their Author ; and that they may be blessed for leading the reader, under the solemn impression of the mournful event to which they owe their present appearance, to "consider the end of his conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

THOMAS M'CRIE.

CLOLA, BY MINTLAW,
January 1836.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE PRESENT EDITION.

The Sermons of Dr M'Crie, which have been so highly prized, have been for some time entirely out of print. They are now given exactly as in the first Edition.

THOMAS M'CRIE.

EDINBURGH, *Oct. 1856.*

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SERMON XXI.

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S E R M O N S.

SERMON I.

THE CHARACTER OF PAUL.

"By the grace of God I am what I am."—1 COR. xv. 10.

IT is not my intention from these words to discourse of the nature of the grace of God, or to prove the necessity of divine influence on the hearts of men, to form them to goodness and happiness. But I propose to show what Paul became through the grace of God, or, in other words, to set before you the leading features of his character as a Christian and apostle.

Every one who has read the New Testament must have observed, that, next to "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus," Paul is the most extraordinary person whose name has been handed down to us in connection with the propagation of the Gospel, and the establishment of the Christian Church. The Church of Rome, building on a single declaration of our Saviour greatly misunderstood, has pretended that Peter was the Prince of the apostles, and universal Bishop. If this had been the fact, it would have been rather strange that we have a much fuller account in the sacred records of the labours of Paul in spreading the Gospel, than we have of those of Peter; and that we possess only two epistles of the latter, while no fewer than thirteen, written by the former, are included in the canon of Scripture. Not that we would infer from this, that Paul was advanced to any species of primacy, either in respect of jurisdiction, dignity, or order among the apostles. They were all brethren, and he that was "greatest" among them, in point of usefulness, was to act as "the least," and he that appeared to be "chief" in gifts, was not only to call himself, but also to behave as, "the servant of all." He that said, "I am of Paul," and he that said, "I am of Cephas," in the primitive church (for the spirit of vainglory and faction, which produced the Popedom, began

early to work), were equally blamable : neither of them was crucified for us, nor were we baptised in the name of either, and their highest honour is, not that they were lords of God's heritage, but ensamples to it, and helpers of its joy. I mean not to speak of the apostolical authority of Paul ; nor do I intend pronouncing his panegyric, a species of discourse in which the excellences of the person described are rhetorically exaggerated, and artificially blazoned, so as to form a masterpiece, in which the device and image of the artist are conspicuously enstamped. Such an attempt the sacredness of the subject forbids ; the text frowns on it ; and it would violate instead of embalming the memory of one whose uniform object it was to "preach not himself, but Christ Jesus the Lord," and who had these words more than any other in his mouth—"Glory not in men." But without incurring this censure, we may surely dwell for a little on a character which meets us so frequently in the word of God. It cannot, surely, be unlawful for us to trace and point out the marks of the finger of God in framing this "chosen vessel" to bear "the unsearchable riches of Christ" to the Gentiles. We must be prone to idolatry, indeed, if we are in danger of putting that servant out of his place who is continually reminding us that he is "nothing," and that his Master is "all in all." In delineating his excellences, and describing his abundant labours, is it possible that we should be puffed up, and not rather humbled and mortified at our falling so far behind a man, who, after all, disclaimed everything bordering on perfection, and gloried only in his infirmities ?

The information which the New Testament contains respecting Paul, appears to point out his character as peculiarly deserving our attention, while it furnishes us with ample materials for describing it. In the Acts of the Apostles we have a narrative of his travels and preaching by the pen of one who accompanied him for many years—who enjoyed the very best opportunities of knowing his inmost sentiments, and of observing his conduct among Jews and Gentiles, among friends and enemies, in circumstances of honour and of disgrace—and whose record of what he saw and heard bears the most indubitable and convincing marks of truth and ingenuousness. Besides this, we have the confidential letters (which, of all things, reflect the character most truly) written by the apostle to individuals and churches in different parts of the world, and at different periods of his life, which show him to be always the same person, and on comparing which with the narrative of Luke, we discover such incidental coincidences in facts, sentiments, and feelings, as throw equal light and authority on both. Those who have carefully examined these documents, and especially those who have entered into the spirit of his epistles, are admitted to all those advantages which were enjoyed by his contemporaries and companions, and may be said, like Timothy, to have "fully known his doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, persecutions, afflictions."¹

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 10,

The epistles of Paul are, in fact, a continuation of the *Acts of the Apostles*, and in them he is the historian of himself, as well as of the churches to which he wrote. They have often been represented as filled with discussions of a speculative and abstruse kind ; but of all writings, sacred or profane, ancient or modern, I know none in which there is such truth and force of moral painting, in which there is such a union of doctrine and practice, and, above all, in which the heart of the author is so completely laid open, and all his sentiments, and feelings, and emotions depicted. In his epistles the writer, to use his own expression, may be "known and read of all men." This renders our present task the less difficult.

With the facts of the early life of Paul you are all well acquainted, and it is unnecessary for me to do more than advert to them. Born in Tarsus, a free city of Cilicia, and of Jewish parents, he inherited from his father the rights of a Roman citizen. Educated by Gamaliel, a celebrated teacher at Jerusalem, he made great proficiency in the knowledge of the Jewish religion ; and having joined the popular sect of the Pharisees, was held in reputation for the correctness of his manners, and his scrupulous observance of the written and traditionary law of his fathers. When Christianity first made its appearance, he opposed it with all the keenness of the sect to which he belonged ; and so inflamed was his zeal, that he became an active and forward instrument in the hands of those who sought to extirpate the nascent religion, and not contented with persecuting its followers to death in Jerusalem, obtained a commission from the chief priests to make inquisition after them in foreign cities, and to bring them to punishment. But he was arrested in this mad career, convinced that he had been ignorantly warring against the truth, and wonderfully converted from an enemy to a friend, from a persecutor into a preacher of the Christian faith. Into the subject of his conversion, which has been treated at large, and justly considered as one of the leading secondary evidences of the truth of the Gospel, I propose not to enter. When sincerely believed, and deeply felt, Christianity is calculated to work so thorough a change on the whole frame of the mind—often sharpening the understanding and enlarging the soul, as well as regulating and purifying the heart—that it is difficult to determine what the natural dispositions of Paul were. From the facts preserved respecting the early part of his life, and from a cautious comparison of them with his subsequent conduct, we may perhaps be warranted in drawing the following inferences. He possessed a good understanding, which enabled him to judge of the characters of men, and manage their various tempers. Pride, rather than vanity of mind, was his besetting sin. Naturally open and ardent in his temper, he was ready to follow violent rather than deceitful courses—to be a warm friend and a determined, but not concealed, enemy. His zeal, though misguided, and his prejudices, though strong, differed from those of a person of weak intellect, or who is actuated by interested motives ; and having embarked

in a cause which his judgment approved, it is probable that he was endued with a resolution and courage which disposed him to prosecute it, notwithstanding difficulties and dangers. I say *it is probable*; for there are unquestionable instances of persons, naturally irresolute and timid, who, under the influence of religion, have acquired a high degree of firmness of mind and moral courage. What was vicious or excessive in the temper of Paul, the grace of God corrected, while it strengthened and sanctified whatever was of a different kind, and rendered it eminently conducive, under the guidance of higher principles, to the advancement of the divine glory, and the best interests of mankind.

I shall, in the first place, take a general survey of the character of Paul; and, in the second place, point out some of its discriminating features.

I. Let us begin with a short survey of his labours as an indefatigable preacher of Christianity. This was the sphere in which he was formed by the grace of God for moving, and in which all the excellences of his private character shone forth. He was chosen, not merely for his own sake, but “for the elect’s sake, that they also might obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” The heavenly treasure was bestowed on him, that he might “make many rich” along with himself. He was called at the same moment to be a saint and an apostle; and “the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ” shone upon his mind, that being made “light in the Lord,” he might irradiate the minds of multitudes. “It pleased God,” says he, “who separated me from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen.”¹

Paul was invested with the entire apostolical office, and we find him discharging every part of it. He dispensed both sacraments, planted and watered churches, ordained elders in them, corrected abuses which crept into them, assisted in settling such controversies as disturbed the whole Christian community, or particular sections of it, and on more than one occasion promoted and took charge of charitable contributions made for the relief of poor or persecuted saints. But the principal employment to which he considered himself as called was that of preaching the Gospel. To this he devoted himself, his time, his talents, his strength, suffering nothing to interfere with it, and devolving upon his companions and helpers those duties which might distract him from his main and most appropriate work. “For Christ,” says he, “sent me not to baptise, but to preach the Gospel.”²

No sooner received he his commission, and his qualifications for executing it, than he entered on the arduous undertaking, which he prosecuted during a period of nearly thirty years, with amazing success, until his course was terminated, and his labours crowned with a

¹ Gal. i. 16.

² 1 Cor. i. 17.

glorious martyrdom. Besides Judea, he preached over the extensive countries of Syria and Cilicia ; of Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia ; of Phrygia and Galatia ; at Ephesus, and other cities of proconsular Asia ; and passing into Europe, he taught in the principal cities of Greece and of Macedonia, as far as Scythia ; in the islands of Cyprus, Crete, and Melita, and the city of Rome. In the course of his travels, he converted thousands to the faith of Christ—Jews, Jewish proselytes, and idolaters, and erected Christian churches in all the principal towns, the most of which he visited thrice, confirming the disciples, and adding to their numbers and their gifts. From the commencement to the close of his career he was never idle—teaching from house to house, preaching in season and out of season, by night and by day ; and when the door of usefulness was shut on him in one place, he removed to another. During the period of which we read in the New Testament, the other apostles resided chiefly at Jerusalem, and they appear to have seldom preached beyond the bounds of Judea before the destruction of that city. But Paul was specially chosen to propagate Christianity among the heathen. Considering himself as “the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles,” he, with the approbation of his brethren, went into all the world, preaching the word everywhere, and seeking out those places, in preference to others, which had not heard the Gospel. “I will not dare to speak of any but those things which Christ hath wrought by me to make the Gentiles obedient by word and deed, through mighty signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God ; so that, from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the Gospel of Christ : yea, so have I strived to preach the Gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build on another man’s foundation.”¹

In the midst of these great labours he composed the letters which have instructed and made wise to salvation so many thousands besides those to whom they were immediately addressed, which have diffused the knowledge of the Gospel far beyond the sphere of his personal exertions, and will continue, along with the other Scriptures, to diffuse it more and more, until, having accomplished all their purposes, they shall be burnt up with the earth and all that is in it.

2. Consider him as a sufferer for the Gospel. It behoved him to submit to more than toil and fatigue, privations and hardships, in pursuing the course which he had chosen. At the very commencement of it he “suffered the loss of all things,”—of everything which he had formerly coveted and laboured to acquire, and valued at the highest rate, and gloried most in—the love of his friends, the high reputation which he had acquired among his countrymen, the prospects which he had of worldly advancement ; and, what was still dearer to his proud and pharisaical heart, that goodly and rich garb of personal righteousness which he had woven and embroidered with infinite care, in

¹ Rom. xv. 18-20.

which he had so often looked on himself with inward gratulation and complacency, and trusted for the approbation of God and men—all, all this he sacrificed cheerfully, threw it at his feet, and trampled on it as so much dirt and refuse, that he might “win Christ and be found in him,” clothed with his righteousness; and that he might discharge that high ministry to which he was called of heaven. “I will show him,” said Jesus to Ananias, when he sent him to baptise his new convert, “how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake;” as if the only thing to which he had been called was to suffer! And he gave him an early proof of the treatment which he might expect from men in his service: for scarcely had he avowed himself a believer in Christianity, and begun to “preach the faith which once he destroyed,” when the Jews sought to kill him; and so keen was their search after him, that it was necessary for his new friends to let him down by a basket over the wall of Damascus. From this time forward he was continually exposed to the deadly hatred of his unbelieving countrymen, along with the contempt and rage of the heathen world. Luke has given us some account of the sufferings he endured, and the hairbreadth escapes he made by sea and land, during the period that he accompanied him. They are frequently adverted to by the apostle himself in his writings. But we could have had no idea of their number, variety, and greatness, if he had not been led to specify them in one of his epistles, in answer to certain false teachers who aimed at marring his usefulness by derogating from the proofs of his apostleship. “Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.” (2 Cor. xi. 23-28.) You will observe, my brethren, that this was written ten years before his death, and that it is but a bare catalogue of the kinds of suffering to which he had been subjected, without mentioning particulars or detailing instances. What a fine opportunity would this have afforded to some persons to gratify what is called an innocent vanity, cover their detractors with shame, and awaken the slumbering sympathies of their friends, by entering into a minute detail of some of the most interesting and affecting of the tales of danger and death, by which it would have been easy to fill a letter larger than any in the New Testament! But the apostle hurries rapidly over them. So far from boasting of them, he apologises for mentioning them, and declares that he “will glory in

the things which concern his infirmities." The only one of which he gives any particulars was the most inglorious of his escapes (verses 32, 33). And he states, as the crowning and heaviest article of his distress, the burden which daily pressed upon his mind from (what many would have contrived to make light enough) "the care of all the churches."

3. Consider him as an advanced and experienced Christian. Deeply impressed as he was with the importance of his apostolical office, and assiduous in the discharge of its duties, he did not forget that he had a soul to be saved or lost, as well as the meanest of those to whom he preached. He found time to attend to and watch over this amidst the multiplicity of his public cares and watchings; and hereby left an example to all who should afterwards be intrusted with the Gospel. He knew that persons might possess the most splendid and even edifying gifts; and that they might perform the most specious acts of charity and piety, and after all be destitute of saving grace, and strangers to the power of godliness. And he did not neglect to apply this test to his own character: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." (1 Cor. xiii. 1-3). He had heard of Judas, and of Ananias and Sapphira, and he did not look upon their attainments as the *ne plus ultra* of hypocrisy and professional religion. He knew that persons might open the door to others, and usher them into the kingdom of heaven, and yet be themselves shut out; that they might be employed as heralds to proclaim peace to others, and as ambassadors might reconcile them to God, and yet continue to be themselves enemies to Him. And knowing these things, he was anxious to prevent such a dreadful issue, and therefore laboured not only that he "might by all means save some" by the Gospel, but also that he "might be partaker thereof with them." "I keep under my body," adds he, "and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway."¹

Though favoured with an immediate revelation from heaven to qualify him for his office, this did not hinder him from searching the scriptures daily, and comparing spiritual things with spiritual, that he might be the more fit for teaching the way of salvation to others; nor did it prevent him from meditating upon these things that he might save himself, applying them to his own soul in the exercise of faith and love, and living under their reviving, purifying, and consolatory influence. What great progress had he made in the Christian life when he presents himself to our view in the first written of his epistles; and yet how dissatisfied with his attainments, and eager in pressing forward! What extensive and deep insight into the divine law! How abiding his sense of the deceitfulness of sin, the remaining depravity of his own

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 23-27.

heart, the seductions of the world, the wiles of Satan ! How pungent his grief at his nonconformity to the will of God ! How ardent his desires to be delivered from it ! At the same time, how forcibly did he feel the all-subduing, heart-constraining influence of the love of Christ, which he commended so warmly to others ! How transporting his admiration of its incomprehensible dimensions ! How firm his reliance on the mercy of God and the merits of Christ ! How triumphant his glorying in the cross of his Saviour ! How unspeakably joyful and full of glory his hope of immortality ! Ah, my brethren (whatever it may be with some of us), it was no cold notions that he delivered, when he discoursed of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, of the wrath of God which is revealed against it, of the curse of the broken law, of the sting of death, and of the fearful looking for of judgment ; of the blindness of the natural man to the things of God, and his aversion to the righteousness of God ; of the law in the members, the besetting sin, and the battle between the flesh and the spirit. It was no empty speculation with him when he descanted on the mysteries of redeeming love, on the blessedness of the man who has been pardoned and justified by the faith of Christ, on the life of faith, on the mortification of sin, on crucifixion to the world, on spirituality of mind and heavenliness of conversation, on rejoicing in tribulation and desiring to depart and be with Christ. You must have observed that it is his almost ordinary style to write in the first person, and that he frequently changes from the plural to the singular number. Other writers have had recourse to this method ; but how different the effect produced on us by it ! In them we are pleased with it as a *figure*, in Paul it strikes us as a *reality* ; in them it is *painting*, in him it is *life*. This is the great charm in the style of Paul. I repeat what I said before, he is the most practical and experimental of writers. The truths of the Gospel come forth warm from a heart that burned with love to them ; the dictates of inspiration are pronounced by one who had previously made them his own, and fed upon them. Who does not perceive the difference between the constrained declarations of the son of Peor, and the productions of those "holy men who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," when they discourse of the "sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow ?" The exclamation of Balaam is beautiful, and it would have been pathetic, too, did we not perceive the eyes of the wretched prophet riveted, even when he was uttering it, on the wages of unrighteousness : "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be as his !" But of the exclamation of Paul on the same subject, we feel it a kind of desecration to say that it is sublime and beautiful, for it is more than both : "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." We can all join, my brethren, in the prayer of Balaam ; but

who among us is prepared, without faltering, to pronounce the assured, the unhesitating, the bold yet believing, the triumphant protestation of Paul?

II. Let us now inquire into some of the more minute and discriminating features in the character of Paul.

1. He was distinguished for humility. This may be considered as a virtue peculiar to Christianity, as it had no place in the most approved systems of morality among the heathen. Every genuine Christian possesses it, and we have no reason to doubt that it shone in the conduct of all the apostles. But there are some circumstances which render the example of humility in Paul brighter and more deserving of our attention. The Pharisees were notorious for their pride, ostentation, and contempt of others; and our apostle, before his conversion, appears to have been strongly infected with the characteristical vice of the sect to which he belonged. The high office to which he was raised, the extraordinary revelations made to him, the eminent gifts with which he was endowed, the great sufferings which he endured for Christ, the abundance of his labours and the uncommon success with which they were crowned, not to mention his attainments in Christian knowledge and experience, were but too apt to kindle those embers of pride and vainglory which remain hid in the hearts of the best men on earth. But he watched over these with the utmost jealousy, and by Christ strengthening him, he was able to keep them under. Instead of dwelling on the numerous proofs of his humility, it may be more profitable for you, and more illustrative of his character, to point out some of those means by which he was able to check and subdue the opposite principle which once reigned uncontrolled in his breast. In the *first* place, he cherished a habitual recollection of what he had been during the time of his ignorance and unbelief. Often do we find him holding this mirror up to his eyes in public, and we may believe he did the same in private. Whenever he had occasion to mention the honourable function to which he was called, or the exertions which he had made in it, he takes care to draw this shade over his eyes, as you may see in the verse next our text: "For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God." This humbling fact he introduces into each of his public apologies, and, what is more striking, we find him introducing it into one of the last epistles which he wrote. And how does he speak of it? As if it happened only yesterday, and as if he never had confessed it and mourned over it before: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who was before a blasphemer, a persecutor, and injurious."¹ *Secondly*, when he enjoyed that ecstatic vision referred to in 2 Cor. xii., he tells us: "Lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelation, there

was given me a thorn in the flesh." Some think he refers here to the ebullitions of that sanguine temper which was constitutional to him, and by which he was apt to be hurried into acts that grieved him. It is more probable that it was a bodily infirmity which impeded him in his public teaching, and rendered it less pleasing to his hearers. But whatever it was, he improved it as an antidote against pride, and a motive for constant dependence on divine aid; and accordingly he declares that he would "glory," not in his sufferings, or escapes, or revelations, but in his infirmity. *Thirdly*, the fickleness of those among whom he had laboured, and their ungrateful requital of his services, helped to keep him humble. The Christians in Galatia who despised not the "temptation which was in his flesh," but received him "as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus," and who would have "plucked out their own eyes and given them to him," when he first preached the Gospel to them, suffered themselves to be so bewitched as to throw away "the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free;" and when he stepped in and would have undeceived them, they counted him an officious intermeddler and an enemy. The same kind of treatment he met with from the Christians at Corinth, to whom he had preached the Gospel "with demonstration of the Spirit and power," and imparted a variety of supernatural gifts, but who, on his departure, suffered his character to be injured and his gifts disparaged by certain foolish, airy, and tumid teachers, who, to accomplish their own selfish ends, had insinuated themselves into their affections, and abused their Christian simplicity. He must be fond of applause indeed, who sighs for that which has been lavishly sprinkled on the most worthless, who is willing to be made a king to-day at the expense of being stoned to-morrow, who glories in being now saluted as a god, at the risk of being anon devoured by the worms that worshipped him. In the *fourth* place, he cherished a humble spirit by reflecting on his imperfections both in knowledge and practice. Though he was an apostle, though he had seen the Lord, though he had the gift of prophecy, "yet," says he, "I know but in part, I prophesy but in part." If he could say, "With my mind I serve the law of Christ," he found daily reason to confess, "I find a law in my members warring against the law of my mind." And, with respect to his general character, he solemnly and repeatedly disclaims all ideas of perfection even in his best moments: "Not that I have attained, either am already perfect." In fine, he had a habitual conviction that whatever was good about him was owing to the grace or free favour of God—a sentiment deeply engraven on his mind, and which he expresses twice in the verse before us.

By these and similar means the apostle repressed the emotions of pride, and grew in humility in proportion to his growth in knowledge and in all goodness. When it was necessary for him to speak of himself, he takes care that his language should be such as not to provoke vanity either in his own breast or in that of others. Has he occasion to

speak of his office? It is the grace of apostleship. Of his qualifications for it? They are gifts. Of his having laboured abundantly in it? "Not I, but the grace of God in me." Of his success? It is God that giveth the increase. Of his sufferings? He had borne them through Christ strengthening him. From the same principle we find him often using the plural number, and speaking in the name of his brethren, when he describes actions and qualities which were peculiarly his own. If he ever adopts language which appears at variance with his usual modesty, it is by constraint, and for the purpose of silencing those who aimed at injuring the Gospel by detracting from the credit of his ministry. On such occasions, instead of being puffed up, he appears humbled at being obliged to assume the style of his detractors. And withal, there is such an ingenuousness and frankness in his apology, such a delicate raillery and chiding of his friends for reducing him to the necessity of saying what, though true, ought to have come from other lips, that every one must perceive that his temper was equally abhorrent of vain boasting and of affected humility. "I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you; for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing."¹ The finest moral description falls short of this natural burst of feeling. In reflecting on what he had said he is covered with blushes; seeking to relieve his mind from the confusion and embarrassment which he felt, he is gradually led to use language even higher than what he had formerly employed; upon which he sinks at once to the expression of his native humility, wrapping himself in the mantle of self-denial and devout abasement. He begins by acknowledging that he had spoken "as a fool," and ends by acknowledging that he was "nothing."

2. The next feature of his character to which I would call your attention is disinterestedness. In taking up the cross of Christ he learned to "deny himself," and the whole of his subsequent conduct afforded a bright example of the purest and most disinterested benevolence. It was under the influence of this principle that he formed the resolution, upon which he continued to act during his ministry, of waving the right which he had, both on the principles of reason and revelation, to be supported by those whom he taught, and of sustaining himself and assisting his companions by exercising the trade of tent-making which he had acquired in his youth. His reasons for this were as wise and generous as the practice itself was disinterested. He felt averse to be "burdensome" to any—he was anxious to convince the heathen that regard to their spiritual advantage was his only motive for coming and remaining among them, and he was determined to preserve his independence as a servant of Christ by avoiding whatever might seem to prevent him from using the utmost freedom in admonishing and reproving the converts which he made by his preaching. Itinerant

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 11.

teachers who lectured for money were to be found at that time in all the cities of Greece. As the Pharisees "devoured widows' houses under the pretence of long prayers," so there arose at an early period among the Christians mercenary individuals, who, for "filthy lucre's sake," taught things which they ought not, subverting whole houses, fomenting divisions, and creating factions; and such, alas! is the infirmity of human nature, and such the smooth arts which mercenary men practise, and the flattering unction which they apply to the humours of men, that they often gained a greater ascendancy over the minds of the Christians than the most gifted and useful of the apostles. This appears from the severe but friendly irony with which Paul expostulates with the Christians at Corinth, who had suffered themselves to become the dupes of their selfish artifice. "Seeing that many glory after the flesh, I will glory also; for ye suffer fools gladly, seeing ye yourselves are wise: For ye suffer, if a man bring you into bondage, if a man devour you (eat you up), if a man take of you, if a man exalt himself, if a man smite you in the face."¹ Knowing that he had a testimony in the breasts of those to whom he wrote, that his conduct had been the very reverse of this, with what boldness does he address them: "Receive us: we have wronged no man; we have corrupted no man; we have defrauded no man!"² But to perceive fully the advantage which his keeping himself free from pecuniary obligations gave him in refuting the calumnies of his detractors, and in putting to shame those who had lent a too credulous ear to them, you must consult the different parts of his Epistles to the Corinthians in which he alludes to that topic. His experience of this gave him much satisfaction in reflecting on the resolution which he had at first adopted on higher grounds.³ By adhering to his original resolution, he also gave an example of disinterestedness to his brethren, and of industry to Christians in general, which we find him repeatedly pressing;⁴ and he felt himself more at liberty to use exertions in procuring contributions from the Gentile churches in behalf of the poor saints in Judea, according to the engagement he had come under to the apostles at Jerusalem.⁵

Two circumstances connected with this subject throw considerable light on that feature of the apostle's character which we are contemplating. In the first place, though he did not choose to depend for his livelihood on the churches which he served, yet he vindicated the right which the ministers of the Gospel had to such support. He did not hold out his own conduct as an example which ought to be universally imitated: he did not speak of it in such a strain as in the slightest degree to disparage or throw a reflection on those who found it necessary, or who chose to act otherwise than himself. He did not even leave their

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 18—20.

² 2 Cor. vii. 2.

³ 1 Cor. ix. 9, 12, 15, 18; comp. 2 Cor. xi. 7—12.

⁴ Acts, xx. 33—35; 2 Thess. iii. 7—12; Acts, xi. 28—30; xxiv. 17.

⁵ Acts, xi. 28, 30; xxiv. 17; Rom. xv. 25—27; 1 Cor. xvi. 1—3; 2 Cor. viii. ix.

conduct open to challenge, or to be defended by themselves ; but, knowing that such a vindication would come with a better grace, and would have more influence from his pen, he applied himself particularly, and of set purpose, to vindicate the right of his brethren to be supported by those among whom they laboured, on principles both human and divine. How different from the conduct of those who, imitating the apostle according to the letter, in circumstances very dissimilar, show but too plainly, by their language, that they have not drunk deep into his spirit ! In the second place, though he “did not desire a gift,”—though he had “learned both to suffer want and to abound,”—though he looked on it as his “reward” to “make the Gospel of Christ without charge,” and ordinarily acted on that principle, yet, whenever the assistance of others was requisite to enable him to discharge the high and indispensable duties of his office, or even to relieve him from great straits, provided it was offered cheerfully, and not as the price of his independence, he did not stand on the point of honour, nor proudly or cynically disdain the benevolence of individuals, or the contributions of churches. Nor did he seek to conceal any instances of this kind as if they had been discreditable to him, or inconsistent with the general principle on which he acted. Hence, referring to the aid which he had received from the Christians in Macedonia when he preached to the Corinthians, he says to the latter, in his strong but easy to be understood language, “I robbed other churches, taking wages of them, to do you service.”¹ Hence the frank and warm manner in which he bears testimony to the uniform attention and kindness of the church at Philippi, in acknowledging the receipt of a recent contribution from them : “Not that I speak in respect of want ; for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. Notwithstanding ye have well done that ye did communicate with my affliction. Even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not that I desire a gift ; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound” (hold your hand—send me no more), “I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.” (Philip. iv. 10-20.) Read the whole passage, my brethren, at your leisure. What a union of dignity with humility, of firmness with sensibility, of disinterestedness with gratitude, of the finest feelings of the man with the most ardent devotion of the saint ! We see him standing as a priest before the altar, and laying upon it the gift which he had received from the Philippians as a free-will offering, the odour of which, after refreshing himself, ascended to heaven, mingled with the incense of his thanksgivings and prayers. The disinterestedness of Paul was displayed in the receiving, as well as in the refusing, of favours. What was the return he was prepared to make to these liberal Christians ? He tells them in the same letter. They had given him of their

substance ; he was ready to impart to them himself. "Yea, and if I be offered (poured out as a libation) on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all."

The disinterested spirit of Paul did not appear only in his readiness to renounce every pecuniary claim. He was prepared, and stood always ready, to make a sacrifice of his ease, his health, his strength, his reputation, his life, in prosecution of his high calling, and for the advancement of the spiritual welfare of those among whom he laboured ; nor could their ingratitude and insensibility to his services cool the ardour of his generous determination to do them good ; "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you ; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved."¹ Nor was this disinterested benevolence confined to those who were Christians. If the maxim be just, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," then his unpremeditated reply to King Agrippa is a convincing proof of this. Struck with his fervent appeal to him, and with the character of his whole appearance and defence, the king could not refrain from exclaiming, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian."—"I would to God that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, EXCEPT THESE BONDS." O how gladly would Paul have continued to wear "these bonds,"—how gladly would he have withdrawn his "appeal to Cesar," and consented to "go up to Jerusalem, and there be judged," provided he could have obtained but half his pious wish ! My brethren, if that sentiment, instead of lying in this despised book, had occurred in a Greek tragedy or a Roman story, or had it proceeded from the mouth of a Socrates or a Cicero instead of that of an apostle, it would have been quoted an hundred times in the writings of the age, as an effusion of the sublimest and purest benevolence. But, alas !—our wits have taste and feeling on every point but one.

How admirably qualified was our apostle for the work to which he was separated by this part of his character ! Wherever selfishness predominates, it mars every great undertaking. It must prove the ruin of every good cause, and lead to the dissolution of every society which is not held together by the palpable bonds of interest. Yet how general its prevalence in the world ; so that we are forced to confess, that those systems of morality which are founded on it have their counterpart too exactly in the conduct of mankind, while all our better feelings revolt from their principles ! How many humbling discoveries of it in the actions even of good men ! How rare the instances of a person thoroughly and uniformly disinterested ! The disappointments which he met with in this respect caused the most pungent grief to Paul. Hence his pathetic exclamation (which many, I am afraid, read without entering into the writer's feelings) on requesting Timothy to be sent to him : "For I have no man like-minded : for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's."² *All !* how that word should thrill our

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 15.

² Philip. ii. 20, 21.

hearts, awaken our jealousy, and cause alarm! If it was so in the primitive times of Christianity, and among those who were around the apostle, what must it be now and among us? Doth not the Spirit say expressly, "That in the last days perilous times shall come: for men shall be lovers of their own selves?"¹ Next to disingenuousness and fraud, nothing was so abhorrent to Paul's mind, and so apt to excite his resentment, as selfishness, and the partialities to which it gives rise. It was, I am inclined to think, a conviction, or apprehension, that he discerned the working of this principle in the mind of Barnabas, which led him into that "sharp contention" which parted these dear friends, and hitherto most cordial fellow-labourers in the Gospel; for Mark, whom Barnabas determined to take with them as the companion of their itinerancy, was his own "sister's son."² But neither this circumstance, nor the consideration that his mother's house had been the asylum of the persecuted saints,³ appeared to Paul to be a good reason for choosing, as an assistant on a religious mission, a young man who had formerly deserted them and the work through levity or selfishness. He remembered the words of his divine Master, "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother;" and he was taught by them, that, though Christianity does not burst asunder the ties of kindred, it requires of all its followers that they be guided by higher considerations in advancing its interests. This may throw light on the bold expression which we find him elsewhere using, when he is speaking of the obligations which believers are under "not to live to themselves, but unto him which died for them and rose again:" "Henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known CHRIST after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more."⁴

We shall pause here for the present. In what has passed under our review, we have seen convincing proofs of the power of the grace of God; but much remains yet to be seen. "To God only-wise be glory, through Jesus Christ, for ever. Amen."

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 1, 2.

³ Acts, xii. 12.

² Acts, xv. 37—39; comp. Coloss. iv. 10.

⁴ 2 Cor. v. 16.

SERMON II.

THE CHARACTER OF PAUL.

"By the grace of God I am what I am."—1 COR. xv. 10.

WE have viewed Paul as an indefatigable preacher of the Gospel, as a great sufferer for it, and as an advanced and experienced Christian; and, proceeding to take a nearer view of his character, we considered him as distinguished for humility and disinterestedness. Let me now call your attention to a higher quality.

3. He was of an elevated and enlarged soul. Of this, disinterestedness is an important and indispensable ingredient. He whose ruling passion is selfishness, or who forms his purposes and regulates his conduct chiefly with a view to his own interest, is incapable of noble efforts, or of generous and heroic deeds. But something more than this is necessary to constitute greatness of mind. Every good man is not a great man, and Paul was both. Some persons possess generous and benevolent dispositions, and, under their influence, are led to make sacrifices for the relief of others, or the promotion of a public cause; but when they come to suffer hardships in consequence of this, and feel themselves unfit to conflict with "the sea of troubles" in which they are involved, they begin to "sigh and look backwards," regret the course which they have adopted, and, if they do not make good their retreat, sink into inactivity and dejection. If the apostle of the Gentiles had laboured under this want of firmness and elevation of mind, he would soon have desisted from his work, or have continued it with languor and reluctance, instead of glorying, as he did, in his labours, infirmities, necessities, and afflictions.

Paul, as we have seen, was distinguished for humility; but humility is not meanness of spirit, nor is pride to be confounded with elevation of soul. When we say that a person has a noble spirit, we do not necessarily mean that he is either haughty or proud; we intend to convey the idea that he despises what is mean and base, and unbecoming his character, rank, or station; that he is above—that is, incapable of—an unworthy action; that his aims and pursuits are high, and that he delights in generous and heroic deeds. Persons of little minds and slender acquirements are most in danger of being puffed up with pride. Modesty is the inseparable attendant on great talents—or at least, on

greatness of soul. Those who have made the highest advances in true knowledge and virtue, perceive most clearly the vast disproportion between that which they aim at, and that which they have reached; they, accordingly, feel disposed to undervalue rather than overvalue their attainments; and, compared with what is above them, the distance between themselves and those who are beneath them dwindles in their eyes, as they look first at the one and then at the other, to a span, to an handbreadth, to nothing. Yet they maintain their elevation, and continue to ascend higher. Self-complacency and self-glorification are the feelings of a person who has ceased to aspire. The very aspirations of a noble nature, and his efforts to rise, imply dissatisfaction with himself. And that this was the state of Paul's mind we learn from his own declaration: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."¹ But though he had learned "not to think of himself more highly than he ought," and "in honour to prefer others," yet he knew how to vindicate his gifts and labours against those who invidiously disparaged them, and how to bring down vain and arrogant boasters to their proper level.² Though he scrupled not to call himself "the least of the apostles," yet, when some attempted to derogate from the authority of his office, by extolling those who had been the companions and brethren of our Lord, he could adopt a very different strain: "Those who seemed to be somewhat, it maketh no matter to me (God accepteth no man's person); those who seemed to be somewhat, in conference added nothing to me."³ A conscious dignity runs through his language and behaviour to believers and unbelievers, friends and foes. He knew what became him, and what he was entitled to as a man and a Roman, as a Christian and an apostle; and although he could "abase himself" for the good of others, and endure with patience and meekness both bonds and scourging, yet he did not think it his duty to expose himself to be trampled upon to gratify the humours of men, and neglected no opportunity of standing up for and maintaining his privileges. The most high-spirited Roman could not evince more jealousy in the maintenance of his rights of citizenship than he did at Philippi, at Jerusalem, and at Cesarea.⁴

I have made these remarks with the view of correcting certain mistakes on this subject which are far from being uncommon, and not because the quality of the apostle's mind, which I have at present in my eye, consisted in conscious dignity. It consisted in high aims, directed by enlarged views, and supported by generous and powerful principles of action. Religion, by calling men to the contemplation of a Being of infinite excellence, and making their chief duty and proper happiness to

¹ Phil. iii. 12—14.

² 2 Cor. x. 7—11; xi. 6—21; xii. 12.

³ Gal. ii. 6.

⁴ Acts, xvi. 37; xx. 26—28; xxv. 8—11.

lie in resembling, pleasing, and enjoying Him, tends naturally to generate such a state of mind. And Christianity, by the principles which it infuses, the examples which it furnishes, and the prospects which it opens up, is eminently calculated to elevate and ennoble. How can it be otherwise? Does it teach men that they have immortal souls, formed after the image of their Maker, and which, though fallen and ruined, are capable of being restored, and destined to be raised to a higher than their pristine state; that they have been redeemed, not with such corruptible things as silver and gold, but with a price of inestimable value; that they are born again from above; that their bodies are living temples in which God dwells; that they are sons of God, and heirs of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away;—does it teach even the poorest that God hath chosen them; that the Gospel is preached to them; that they are rich in faith, and heirs of a kingdom; that they are placed under a special providence, and favoured with the ministry of angels; that they are redeemed to be a royal priesthood to God; in short, that all things are theirs—the world, life, and death, things present and things to come; and can they believe these things, and live under the influence of them, and not have their minds elevated, enlarged, invigorated? Christianity is calculated to form characters of whom “the world is not worthy,” and who look upon the whole world as not worthy to be an inheritance and portion to them; who would not be bribed by it to do an action which is dishonourable to the holy name which they bear, and the family in heaven and earth to which they belong; and who, though all its kingdoms, with all their glory, were laid at their feet, would not make it their god, or say to it, “Thou art my confidence.” Brought to a close and entire dependence on God, they feel independent of all things else; and though ready to “become the servants of all men” for their good, “will not be brought under the power of any,” by yielding them a slavish subjection. Reconciled to God, and assured that nothing can separate them from his love in Christ, they live above the world while in it; its changes do not essentially affect their happiness; they are prepared to quit it, and look forward to death as the period of their emancipation; and yet they look upon it as their high duty to glorify God here, and do not consider that they are at liberty to throw away their lives, or to leave their present station, until they are relieved and dismissed by him to whom they live and die. Secure in the protection of the Omnipresent, they fear no evil; assured of the help of the Omnipotent, they deem no task to which they are called hopeless or impracticable. Such is the genius of Christianity, and such the characters which it forms.

But every man in his own order. There is one glory of the sun, another of the moon, and another of the stars; and even one star differeth from another star in glory. All have not the same clear and comprehensive knowledge of the Gospel, all have not the same full and overpowering assurance of its truth; the hearts of all are not alike laid

open, and kept open, to its influence, so as that it should "have free course and be glorified," by occupying and swaying their every faculty and power. "There is a diversity of operations," though "it is the same God that worketh all in all." Nature has endowed some men with a greatness of soul above others ; and there is a similar diversity and gradation in the creations of grace. When Saul was anointed by Samuel to be king of Israel, the Spirit, we are told, came upon him, and "God gave him another heart ;"—a generous, noble, princely spirit, qualifying him for the high station to which he was destined. And when the New Testament Saul was set apart to a high office in the church, "God gave him another heart ;"—a magnanimity corresponding to the greatness of the work to which he was called, not only as an apostle, but the apostle of the Gentiles—the apostle of the world.

You may be disposed, my brethren, to compare the work allotted to Paul, to that of one who, in our day, sets out on a mission to convert the heathen. But they are, in fact, very different. The modern missionary must no doubt make sacrifices, and lay his account with difficulties ; but he has great encouragements. He leaves behind him a multitude of friends, who take a warm interest in his welfare, and are ready to receive him back with cordiality, provided he is unsuccessful. He goes out from a country the very name of which is sufficient to procure him a ready reception, and protect him from personal danger from the most distant and barbarous tribes. Above all, he has the satisfaction of reflecting, that Christianity is already established in the earth, and can be exposed to no risk from the failure of his expedition. But Paul left few friends behind him. His own countrymen were his greatest enemies ; and instead of offering him the prospect of an asylum, if he were forced to retreat, were the means of stirring up persecution against him wherever he went. He had no earthly protector or patronage to look to. "Christ crucified," who had been "to the Jews a stumblingblock," had not yet been "preached to the Gentiles ;" and that he should be "believed on by the world," was then in the highest degree improbable, according to all the views of human reason. The obstacles which resisted the propagation of the Gospel presented themselves on every side, rising one behind another—the jealous policy of rulers, the pride of philosophers, the self-interest of a crafty and long-established priesthood, and the ignorance, superstition, and brutal rage of a licentious populace. What a combination of qualities did it require in the person of the individual, who, in the name of God, first attacked and broke through these barriers ! What faith, confidence, and courage in making the attack ! What firmness, self-possession, caution, circumspection, in keeping the ground which had been gained ! What fortitude, resolution, and patience in enlarging it ! It required a soul raised to a high pitch, not by sudden impressions and the force of a heated imagination, but by enlightened and steady principles ; a soul wound up in all its faculties, intellectual and moral, regulated, balanced, sus-

tained, and furnished with a spring which could bear the severest pressure, which would not wear itself away by its own motion, nor suffer derangement from the changes of external circumstances : a soul exalted above the world, and all those worldly motives by which men are ordinarily actuated, attracted, or repelled ; and disengaged from all selfishness, effeminacy, envy, illiberality, and those narrow prejudices which are founded on the distinction of nations, classes, and conditions in life ; a soul filled with supreme love to God, and ardent love to man, fired with heavenly ambition to advance the divine glory in the highest, and promote the eternal welfare of mankind, and which, in pursuing this noble object, was prepared to make all sacrifices, sustain all fatigues, run all hazards, endure all sufferings. And such, my brethren, was the soul of Paul. At the call of God, he went forth into the world, “bearing” (it was all his armour) “the name of the Lord Jesus”—not knowing whither he went, but prepared to go wherever Providence pointed the way, to the north, the south, the east, or the west ; and not knowing what would befall him, nor moved by the warnings which he received in every city, that bonds and imprisonments awaited him. His heart was enlarged to all the world, and he trusted to his Master to open before him the door of faith, and to preserve him as long as he had services for him to perform. Never did conqueror, whose breast swelled with the love of fame, pant so eagerly for a field on which to signalise his prowess, as he panted to enlarge the boundaries of the kingdom of grace, and to multiply the bloodless triumphs of the cross. When he had planted the Gospel in one city or country, he took his departure to another, leaving it to others to enter on the fruits of his labours ; and uninterrupted as his exertions, and rapid as his movements were, they were yet outrun by the celerity of his desires, which had marked out beforehand as the scenes of future labours, spots which, there is reason to think, he never reached during the limited period of his usefulness. Hear his own words to the Christians at Rome, whom he had not yet personally visited, and mark how he speaks of a projected expedition into Spain :—“I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you that are at Rome also.—Now having no more place (of usefulness) in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you ; whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you.—And I am sure that, when I come unto you, I shall come in the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.”¹ How was he sure of this ? Because he had long felt, and at that moment continued to feel, that Gospel flowing out of his heart in irrepressible desires to be the means of blessing them. What a strong expression of the state of his feelings ! He knew the gift of God, and had drunk of that spiritual water, which was in his heart a well of living water springing up to the supply of himself and of many, and which, the more that was drawn from it, flowed the more

¹ Rom. i. 14, 15 ; xv. 23, 24, 29.

freely and copiously, because it was supplied by the Spirit, from Him in whom "all fulness dwells." But did he forget those churches which he had planted, in his eagerness to christianise the barren and waste parts of the world? The frequent visits which he paid them, and the letters and messengers he sent to them from time to time, testify in the negative. The passion which he felt to convert souls was equalled by the agony (I use his own word), the agony which he felt for their conservation; so that, when thrown into doubt about their state, he "travailed in birth the second time." His capacious soul could admit, and receive, so far as they were known to him, all the concerns, the joys, and griefs "of all the churches." Take only one instance among many which might be produced. From a tender and considerate regard to the good of the Christians at Corinth, he had determined not to revisit them until their unseemly heats and factions were allayed. How was he affected while he waited at Ephesus to receive the tidings of this longed-for, but protracted issue? "O ye Corinthians! our mouth is open unto you; our heart is enlarged!" What a picture of a heart! We see him standing on the shore of the *Ægean* sea, over against Corinth, with his arms extended towards that city, and in the attitude of speaking. We hear the words by which he seeks to relieve his overcharged breast, heaving and ready to burst with the fulness of those desires which he had long felt to come among them, satisfy them of the sincerity of his affection, and replenish their souls with the consolation with which he himself had been comforted. "O ye Corinthians, our mouth is open to you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitened in us, but ye are straitened in your own bowels. Now for a recompense in the same (I speak as unto my children), be ye also enlarged."¹

4. Our attention is particularly called to two qualities, by which, whether they are viewed as entering into the formation of magnanimity, or as produced by it, our apostle was eminently distinguished—intrepidity and independence. Elevated as his mind was, and borne up by such powerful principles, he felt as moving in a region which danger could not reach. Incased in the divine panoply of the Gospel, he was inaccessible to those impressions which create apprehension and alarm. That which was most valuable and precious about him he had committed to one who, he was persuaded, was "able to keep it;" he was convinced that he had embarked in the best and most honourable of causes, in the behalf of which it was glorious to suffer and die; he believed that it would survive him, and that his sufferings and death, as well as his active services, would contribute to its advancement; he confided in the protection of Him whose cause it was, so long as there remained anything for him to do in its behalf; he rested assured that, when he had "finished his course, and fought the good fight," he should "receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away;" and so filled was his soul with these high thoughts and animating feelings, that there was no room left for fear to abide or enter. Often was he "in perils" of

every kind, but in the midst of them he possessed his soul in peace. He descended fearlessly into the arena, to "fight with wild beasts at Ephesus;" when surrounded by infuriated and fanatical mobs, he remained unmoved. On more than one occasion, his temper appears to have been ruffled by the illegal violence of his enemies, and the undutiful conduct of his friends; but we never read of his courage having been shaken, or of his having yielded to an unmanly and unchristian timidity. When urged by those who trembled for the safety of his valuable life, to keep at a distance from danger, his reply was similar to that of the noble-minded governor of Judea—"Should such a man as I flee?" On his last journey to Jerusalem, to discharge a debt of brotherly love, the premonitions and symptoms of his danger multiplied as he advanced, so that he could no longer resist the impression, that bonds and imprisonments, at least, awaited him: "But none of these things move me," says he; "neither count I my life dear, that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry that I have received of the Lord to testify the Gospel of the grace of God." To face the danger was not so difficult to him as to break from the embraces of his weeping brethren, who threw their bodies in his way to divert him from a journey which they foresaw would prove hazardous to him, and he was forced to summon up all his courage to effect his escape. "What mean ye to weep and to break mine heart? for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."¹ After he fell into the hands of his unnatural countrymen, we find him displaying the coolest and most collected intrepidity in his appearances before governors and kings, and, lastly, before the Roman emperor;—not only keeping himself from everything that was pusillanimous in language or demeanour, but avowing his faith and his innocence, defending both with amazing boldness and eloquence, and leaving on the minds of the most partial and unjust of his judges an impression favourable to his cause and to the dignity of his character.

And then, my brethren, you are to observe that his courage was characterised by prudence. It was free from rashness, vaunting, or foolhardiness. He did not, like some enthusiasts, court persecution, throw himself in the way of danger, or neglect or refuse to employ any lawful means of escaping or saving himself from them. When Festus, "willing to do the Jews a pleasure," asked him if he would go up to Jerusalem to be judged, he did not suffer himself to be betrayed into a consent to this proposal by the temptation of making a display of conscious innocence and boldness; but he replied nobly and wisely in language which conveyed a severe, though tacit, reproof of the insidious and dishonourable partiality of his judge: "I stand at Cesar's judgment seat, where I ought to be judged: to the Jews have I done no wrong, as thou very well knowest. For if I be an offender, or have committed anything worthy of death, I refuse not to die: but if there

¹ Acts, xxi. 13.

be none of these things whereof these accuse me, no man may deliver me unto them. I appeal unto Cesar."¹ What a contrast between this and the peevish reply of Festus, who felt himself reproved and humbled in the presence of his injured but dignified prisoner! "Hast thou appealed unto Cesar? unto Cesar shalt thou go." It is thus that men clothed with authority will sometimes make a merit of injustice, and try to conceal the littleness of their mind by drawing themselves up on their chair of state, without reflecting that the concealment is seen through by those who pity more than they despise them.

Independence of mind is a still rarer quality than intrepidity. How many are the avenues, besides that of fear, by which corruption may enter the mind, and lower its tone and deteriorate its virtue! Pride may prove in some cases an antidote to timidity. But a stronger and more incorruptible guard is required to bar the entrance of the desire which all, and especially those who have been long harassed and tossed, feel for ease and quiet—of partiality to friends, an anxiety to gratify those whom we esteem, and to whom we have been indebted, and deference to public opinion and the authority of those who are held in reputation by the wise and good. To disinterestedness our apostle had added a strict training and mental discipline. He had "learned in whatsoever condition he was, therewith to be content." He was accordingly independent of external circumstances, neither buoyed up by prosperity nor depressed by adversity, blinded by favours nor biassed by injuries, elated by honour nor cast down by disgrace.

The love of fame and desire of distinction has in every age prompted men to engage in the most fatiguing and hazardous enterprises. It was this passion which contributed to form the characters of those who were so highly celebrated in Greece and Rome as heroes and patriots. An attentive consideration of their conduct may convince us that the "immense desire of glory" held a higher place in their breast than the boasted love of country. Nor were they singular in this. To find a man who is "good without show" has been always easier than to discover one who is "above ambition great." Yet no man is truly great in whom this passion is paramount. It is of a more refined nature indeed than the sordid love of gain, but still it is selfish, and therefore low. The love of what is great, and not the desire of being thought great, constitutes greatness, and a thirst for applause argues a defect and emptiness in the breast in which it resides. Nor can any man be truly independent whose governing principle is the desire of fame. He is a slave to those on whose good opinion his highest enjoyment depends—a slave, not to one, but to thousands. He must study to please them, and shape all his actions, not according to his own judgment, but theirs, and thus be under continual temptation to violate truth and sacrifice a good conscience. Paul was not indifferent to the opinion of the wise and good. He "commended himself to every man's

¹ Acts, xxv. 10, 11.

conscience in the sight of God." He bestowed praise on others, and therefore could not despise it in his own person. But he aimed at something higher and nobler. The glory of God, the honour of Christ, the propagation of truth and holiness, the eternal salvation of his fellow-men, fidelity to the trust committed to him, the future approbation of his divine Master, the reward which He would confer on him, and the testimony of his own conscience, occupied, all of them, a higher place in his regards than the approbation and applause of the world. He had too much good sense not to perceive that by embarking in the cause of Christianity he had baulked all reasonable hopes of obtaining this, and he did not seek to compensate for the loss of it by courting the favour of his new friends. Listen to the appeal which he makes to the Galatians : "Do I now persuade" (conciliate the favour of) "men or God? or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ."¹ And his protestation to the Thessalonians : "As we were allowed to be put in trust with the Gospel, so we speak ; not as pleasing men, but God, who trieth our hearts. For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness ; God is witness : nor of men sought we glory, neither of you, nor yet of others."² Hence it came about that he moved forward in a straight course in the discharge of his public duty, without being drawn to the right hand or to the left by the desire of securing the favour or declining the displeasure of men. Hence he continued to "tell the truth" at the expense of being "counted an enemy" by those who had held him in the highest estimation, and "shunned not to declare the whole counsel of God, keeping nothing back," however offensive or ungrateful it might be to some of the hearers. Hence he was kept from imitating those who "corrupted the word of God," and from adopting any of their disingenuous methods for removing or lessening "the offence of the cross" in the eyes of the world, which was "crucified" to him and he to it. Hence he was under no temptation of acting on the system of pious frauds for advancing a good cause, but pronounces its fundamental principle damnable. Hence he withstood to the face such as were "pillars" of the church, and rebuked the most honoured of his brethren when they "walked not with a straight foot ;" while, on the other hand, neither the ingratitude of his friends, nor the inveterate hostility of his adversaries, prevented him from praying and labouring for their salvation.

Yet his independence was not that of selfishness, pride, or affectation. He was condescending and indulgent to the meanest and weakest individual. In all things consistent with truth and duty, he endeavoured to "please not himself, but others, for their good to edification." Everything recorded of him justifies the striking description which he has transiently given of this part of his character : "Though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the

¹ Gal. i. 10.² 1 Thess. ii. 4—6.

more.”¹ He had before reminded the Corinthians, that he “had not used the power” by which he might justly have claimed support from them; and now he informs them, that the freedom which he had acquired by such conduct he willingly laid at their feet, that he might promote their salvation. Here you have conscious power combined with cheerful self-denial, a noble freedom with the most rational subjection, the strictest independence with the most amiable indulgence. This is Christian virtue,—this is true magnanimity.

5. His heart was tender, and his affections warm. We are apt to regard a person of great talents with that species of cold thrilling admiration with which we look up to a mountain whose lofty summit is perpetually covered with ice and snow. Nor is this feeling altogether without reason; for such is the imperfection of human nature, that the great and gentle, the lofty and tender, are seldom seen united in the same individual. Among the apostles of our Lord, one was the Son of Thunder, and another the Son of Consolation—one was distinguished for great, and another for good, qualities. Not that there is any real contrariety between these two kinds of qualities, or that they are absolutely incompatible. He who is the greatest is at the same time the best of beings, and is not only infinite in wisdom and power, but also “very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” He upon whom “the spirit of counsel and might rested,” could not refrain from melting into tears at the grave of that friend whom He was about to raise from the dead. “Jesus wept”—wept, too, over that city, the inhabitants of which were about to put Him to a cruel death; and the thought of his own sufferings, which were at hand, was swallowed up in tender concern for theirs, which were at a distance. Paul had drank deeply of this spirit of his divine Master, and he displayed it towards his unbelieving, ungrateful, implacable countrymen, who had pursued him with the same hostility with which they had treated their Saviour. “I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh.”² Ah! my brethren, how difficult is it for us, “straitened,” as we are, “in our own bowels,” narrow and illiberal, selfish and indeavour as our hearts are, to take the height of this aspiration, or penetrate the depth of its spring! There is more here than an effusion of disinterested benevolence, more than an expression of sacred patriotism. It is an ejaculation from a great heart, filled with all goodness, long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness, compassion, tenderness; touched with a recollection of its own former sinfulness; alive to all the ties of kindred and country; crucified to every selfish feeling; quickened and inflamed by the knowledge-surpassing love of Christ. No wonder that those who have contemplated it have taxed their ingenuity to find an interpretation of the language in which it is conveyed, which

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 19.² Rom. ix. 1—3.

would bring it within the range of what they deemed practicable, or lawful to wish and utter. Certainly, we are not to understand them in a sense which would imply a violation of Christian principle, or a denial of the indissolubility of that union between the Redeemer and all his genuine friends, in which our apostle elsewhere triumphs ; but neither, on the other hand, are we to reduce their meaning to the standard of our diluted and lukewarm affections. I am averse to admit any construction of the words which would strip them of the resemblance which they bear to the patriotic and self-devoting request of the great Jewish legislator,¹ between whose character and that of Paul I think I observe such a striking coincidence, especially in the sacrifices which they made for the same cause, their "esteem of the reproach of Christ," and their exemplification of all that is amiable in union with all that is magnanimous.

The grace of God can soften the most insensible and obdurate heart, and make it overflow with loving-kindness, as the waters gushed from the rock smitten by the rod of Moses. But in the present instance it purified a heart which was originally open and affectionate, directed its streams into a new and more enlarged channel, and caused to flow in upon them, with irresistible and increasing force, a tide which raised them to a supernatural height of devotion and benevolence. The strength of his devotional feelings is apparent from the whole of his writings. With what mingled admiration and delight does he dwell on the discoveries of divine wisdom in the economy of redemption ! How overpowered his mind when he attempts to describe the incommensurable love of Christ ! Whenever he approaches such themes, he yields to the power of their attraction, and is carried away by it with such rapidity that, if inattentive, we lose him, and are unable to track his flight. He cannot speak of them in an ordinary strain. When employed in teaching men the deep things of God, he, as if unconsciously, addresses himself to God. His letters are written on his bended knees ; and a system of divinity, comprising the most mysterious truths, is conveyed in the form of a continued prayer or thanksgiving. Of this the first chapters of the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians are examples. Yet ardent, elevated, and even rapturous as his devout emotions are, there is nothing enthusiastical in the sentiment, or extravagant and unbecoming in the expression. Our judgment approves as excellent what he expresses in the most impassioned language ; and we believe him when he tells us that he cannot reach the sublimity of his subject, just because he has raised our minds to that height which enables us to look upon it. There is nothing in his writings of the unintelligible jargon of mystics and essentialists. If it is necessary for him to "come to visions and revelations," instead of entertaining us with what he had seen and heard when "caught up to the third heaven," he has nothing to communicate, excuses his reserve

¹ Exod. xxxii. 32.

by telling us that it was "unspeakable, and not lawful for a man to utter; and, introducing a subject which was more pleasing to him, because it is more edifying to us, he proceeds to descant, with his usual eloquence, on the infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, distresses, which he endured for Christ's sake.¹

Nor was his philanthropy less ardent than his devotion. But philanthropy is a cold affection compared with that which the apostle felt for those among whom he laboured in the Gospel of Christ, and which he evinced by his unwearied assiduities, his painful watchings, his anxious solicitude, his self-forgetfulness, his tenderness, his tears. "Though ye have ten thousand instructors," says he to the Corinthians, "yet have ye not many fathers."² His was indeed parental affection, and that of no ordinary kind. "We were gentle among you" (he is addressing himself to the Thessalonians), "even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so, being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the Gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear to us."³ While feeding them with "the sincere milk of the word," he felt ready to pour out his blood for their sake. One would think that love could not have been more intense; and yet his removal from them caused it to burn with a more vehement flame, converting his concern for their spiritual welfare into an anxiety which grew to be agonising and intolerable. Hearing of the persecution which raged at Thessalonica, and afraid that the confidence of his young converts might be shaken by it, he became impatient to visit them. "Once and again" he made the attempt, "but Satan," says he, "hindered me." At last he could "no longer forbear," but sent Timotheus, his sole companion, from Athens, to establish and comfort them; and having received a favourable report from him, he was "comforted over them," amidst all his personal afflictions; "for now," says he, "we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord." His fears of their stability had almost exanimated him; the intelligence of their apostasy how could he have survived? for, as he says of another church, "ye are in our hearts, to die and live with you."⁵

The annals of the Corinthian church furnish us with still more striking illustrations of this part of the apostle's character. He had planted that church, been the means of converting many in it to the faith of Christ, conveyed to them a rich profusion of spiritual gifts, and left them in a most flourishing state. But after his departure, false apostles, deceitful workers, had entered among them, corrupted their Christian simplicity, and introduced many flagrant abuses. "Out of much affliction and anguish of heart he wrote unto them with many tears," expostulating with them on their conduct, and beseeching them to return to their duty. Scarcely had he despatched the letter when he began to "repent." The epistle contained nothing which was calculated

¹ 2 Cor. xii. 1—10.

⁴ 1 Thess. iii. 7, 8.

² 1 Cor. iv. 15.

³ 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8.

⁵ 2 Cor. vii. 3.

to irritate them, and the object of the writer was, "not that they should be grieved," but that they "might know the love which he had to them more abundantly."¹ But love has its jealousies, and sensibility its fears, for which they cannot account at the bar of cold reason. Something might have been done to abate the severity of rigid reproof, to explain what was hard to be understood, and to ascertain the sense of what they were disposed to misconstrue. His presence among them would, in existing circumstances, add oil to the flame of contention, but another might be useful in preventing them from throwing themselves into the arms of designing leaders or abandoning themselves to despair. Accordingly Timothy is despatched to Corinth, and after him Titus is sent. In the mean time "a door is opened of the Lord" to the apostle to preach Christ's gospel at Troas; but, strange to relate! he who panted so earnestly for such opportunities, had neither heart nor tongue to improve the present. The expected messenger from Corinth had not arrived—he had "no rest in his spirit," and abandoning the rich harvest which invited his labours, he wandered into Macedonia. Nor yet did he find ease: "For when we were come into Macedonia, our flesh had no rest, but we were troubled on every side; without were fightings, within were fears." At last Titus arrives with tidings from Corinth. The apostle's letter had been well received; it had produced the intended effects; a spirit of repentance had fallen upon the church; they had applied themselves vigorously to the correction of abuses; the love which they bore to their spiritual father had revived with additional strength. "*NOW!* thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place! Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my glorying of you: I am filled with comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our tribulation."² What a sudden change! What a wonderful transformation! Formerly we saw him, like a soldier, wounded, weak, disabled, dispirited, fallen to the ground: now he is lifted up, victorious, and borne on the triumphant car. Formerly, a retrospect of his toils imparted no joy to his heart, and he was ready to exclaim, "Surely I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought and in vain:" but the tidings of Titus had the same effect on him which the tasting of the honey had on Jonathan; and now, on looking back on the same course, he sees only a train of victories and triumphs. Such alternations of feeling, and quick changes from fear to hope, and from grief to joy, on the account of others, are incident only to tender hearts. The same feeling dictated that wise and winning mode of address which pervades the writings of our apostle, and which he adopts whenever he has occasion to reprove, or seeks to reclaim. He is ingenious in finding excuses for his brethren. He only "partly believes" the unfavourable reports of them. He "stands in doubt" of them—is "afraid of them;" but is unwilling to think the worst. "Have ye

¹ 2 Cor. ii.² 2 Cor. ii. 14.; vii. 4.

suffered so many things in vain, if it be yet in vain?" If he had been grieved, it was only "by a part" of them. "Ye have not injured me at all." This language is not the result of art, or of a frigid prudence, but flows from the warmth of his affections, and a delicate apprehension of saying anything which might, in the slightest degree, mar the spiritual benefit of those who were concerned.—Let me add, that his affection was not limited to those among whom he had laboured personally, but extended to "as many as had not seen his face." He tells us that he felt a tender solicitude for all the churches, and for every individual in them. "Who is weak, and I am not weak? who is offended, and I burn not?"¹ But I would quote the greater part of his writings, if I were to produce all the proofs of this feature of his character.

Learned men have employed themselves in forming a key to the Epistles of Paul. Without despising their labours, or undervaluing the assistance which may be drawn from them for understanding what is obscure in his writings, I cannot help saying that attention to that quality of his mind which we are now considering is the best key to his works. It will enable us to unlock the cabinet which contains such rare treasures, and to find our way into some of its most concealed and intricate compartments. It will often do more than any instrument in the art of interpretation for explaining his peculiar phraseology, his seeming tautologies, his puzzling paradoxes, his transitions, digressions, parentheses, and hyperboles. Without this sympathetic tact, the acutest critic and the most skilful divine will frequently fail in hitting his sense, following the strain of his discourse, or penetrating the depth of his argument; and they will certainly fail in perceiving his beauties. A ravishing persuasion of the sublime truths of Christianity, and an intense love to the souls of men, are the two elements which form Paul's eloquence, and by which his writings are distinguished from those of all other orators.

In fine, after what has been advanced, it is scarcely necessary for me to add, that his ardent zeal for religion was tempered with the greatest moderation. But as this part of his character is frequently brought forward in the evangelical record, it is proper that it should be distinctly stated here. Before his conversion, Paul was "exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers;" but then his zeal was blind, bigoted, intolerant, and violent. His zeal for Christianity was equally ardent, but it was enlightened and liberal, and under the government of the mild and gentle principles of the religion which he had espoused. He was "very jealous" of the honour of his new Master, and wholly devoted to his interests; but then it was as became the servant of him who was "meek and lowly of heart," and who "came not to destroy men's lives, but to save them." If "his spirit was stirred in him" when he saw the cities which he visited "wholly given to idolatry," and if he felt constrained in duty to teach that "they were no gods which were

made with men's hands," this he did in the synagogues of the Jews, or in the forum, where it was customary to treat such topics ; and there was nothing in his discourse which was calculated to excite sedition, or inconsistent with the decorum due to a worship founded on prescription, and sanctioned by the voice and laws of the public. If, under the influence of love to the truth and to the souls of men, he pronounced those "accursed" who should "preach another gospel," he was willing that the curse should fall on himself, provided he was found guilty of the sin. If he directed the church of Corinth to "deliver unto Satan" a vicious member, it was "for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit might be saved." If he announced that the weapons with which he was armed were "in readiness to revenge the disobedience" of the proud and obstinate, he at the same time declares that he would not draw the spiritual sword until the "obedience" of the sound part of the church was "fulfilled," and time was given to all to repent.

What an eminent display of this temper did he give in the controversy respecting the observance of the Mosaical law, which divided the opinions and disturbed the peace of the primitive church ! In maintaining the doctrine of gratuitous justification by faith, in opposition to those who would have made this privilege to depend on the performance of works, whether moral or ceremonial, he was inflexible ; and he "gave place, by subjection, no, not for an hour," to those who sought to impose the yoke of Jewish ceremonies on Gentile believers. But, at the same time, he readily acquiesced in, and used his authority to execute, the decree of the apostles and elders at Jerusalem as to certain things which it was necessary for the Gentiles to avoid, in order to preserve communion with their Jewish brethren. With respect to believers of the Jewish nation, his conduct was different. He knew that the ceremonial law was virtually deprived of its obligation by the death of Christ ; but he was aware that all who had embraced the Gospel did not possess the knowledge and assurance of this truth, that it was the will of God that their minds should be gradually enlightened in it, and that they were accepted by him when they acted in this matter according to their conviction, and with charity toward their brethren. Accordingly, he exhorted them not to condemn one another on account of their different opinions and practices ; but, at the same time, showed that it was the duty of the more enlightened to have a due regard to the scruples of their weaker brethren, and not to use their own liberty in such a way as to lay a stumblingblock before them, or to lead them into the commission of what they thought sin. In this way, while he instructed the more ignorant, and conducted them gradually to the knowledge of their Christian liberty and privileges, he repressed the rashness, selfishness, and pride of the more knowing. And the doctrine which he taught on this head he was careful to exemplify in his own practice. While he proclaimed aloud, "I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean in

itself," with the same breath, and in same tone, he declared : "If meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." Hence the maxim by which he regulated his conduct in such matters : "All things are lawful for me, but all things are not expedient : all things are lawful for me, but all things edify not." Hence the description which he gives of his uniform behaviour in everything which was not in itself or by implication sinful : "Unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews ; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law ; to them that are without law, as without law (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ), that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak : I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some." (1 Cor. ix. 20—22). Here zeal and charity meet together, and truth and peace embrace one another. Here we have a genuine and living exhibition of Christian liberality, which has been so often counterfeited and caricatured ; for what is true liberality of mind but a good heart shining through a clear and enlarged understanding ?

SERMON III.

THE ADVANTAGES OF ADVERSITY, ILLUSTRATED IN THE HISTORY OF JOSEPH.

"He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant; whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron: until the time that his word came: the word of the Lord tried him. The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance; to bind his princes at his pleasure, and teach his senators wisdom."—Ps. cv. 17-22.

WHERE, even in works of imagination formed solely to please, will we find a story so beautiful, and so delightfully told, as that of Joseph in the book of Genesis? Which of you does not recollect from a child the intense and never-wearying interest with which you listened again and again to the recital of the events of his checkered life—the tears of sorrow which you shed over the successive calamities which overwhelmed the amiable youth—and the tears of joy which flowed still more copiously at the unexpected turn of affairs which raised him from a prison to the second place in Egypt, and gilded the last hours of the venerable old man his father?

But the history of Joseph would not have obtained a place in the inspired volume, had it not been highly instructive as well as deeply interesting. Not to speak of the important moral lessons it conveys, such as the baneful effects of envy, especially among children of the same family; the force of religion in fortifying the mind against temptation, and sustaining it under the pressure of adversity; and the power of conscience in awakening the remembrance of sins long ago committed and forgotten;—what a striking illustration does this narrative furnish of the mysterious way in which Providence accomplishes its designs by a concatenated series of second causes, including circumstances seemingly fortuitous, and the volitions of rational agents who mean nothing less than that issue which they contribute unconsciously to effect and secure. Had Joseph not told his dreams to his brethren—had he not been sent by his father to Dothan—had not the Ishmeelites passed by when he was in the pit—had he not been sold to Potiphar—had his mistress been a better woman, or his master a worse man—had he been thrown into any other than the king's prison,—in fine, had the

officers of Pharaoh not incurred the displeasure of their master, Joseph's advancement could not have taken place, and the purposes of heaven to save much people alive, and to provide a settlement for Israel in Egypt, with all the varied and long train of grand results, embracing the happiness of all nations in all generations, which depended upon this, would have been deranged and rendered abortive.

It is not, however, my intention at present to dwell on these topics. What I intend is to illustrate another truth, taught by this history, and prominently exhibited in the text, viz.: That those persons whom God has destined to be pre-eminently useful in advancing his glory, and promoting the good of his church and of mankind, he usually prepares for this task, by causing them previously, and often at an early period of life, to pass through scenes of severe affliction.

Affliction forms an essential part of the discipline of God's family, and to each of his children is allotted that share of it which infinite wisdom sees to be necessary and meet. This is the general law of the house, from which there is no exemption. Neither the instrumentality of word and ordinances, nor the implantation of gracious principles, nor the active cultivation of them, nor the superintending agency of the Holy Spirit, can supersede or render useless this severe but salutary process in forming the character of the "heirs of salvation."

We must not presume to "limit the Holy One," or invade his sovereignty in apportioning trials, as well as dividing gifts, "severally as he willeth." He will do what is best in every case, for his own glory, for the good of the individual, and for the benefit of many. But he hath prescribed general laws to himself, or, to speak more modestly, he usually acts after a certain way in the moral government of the world; and those who dutifully and humbly observe his operations, will, without pretending to scan them, be able to discover such reasons as serve, not only to vindicate his managements, but to display their manifold wisdom. As he "afflicts not willingly," nor to a greater extent than is necessary for gaining his wise and holy ends, we may safely conclude, that trials of a less severe and searching kind will be allotted to those who tread "the common walks of virtuous life," than to such as are called forth to more arduous service. The more conspicuous and enlarged the sphere in which any person moves, the more difficult are the duties which he has to perform, and the stronger the temptations to which he is exposed; and consequently he needs to pass through a severer course of disciplinary preparation. It may be added, that, though "no man liveth to himself," yet, comparatively speaking, the sufferings of the many are chiefly necessary on their own account, and as a preparative for heaven, and therefore may be endured by them at any period of their life; whereas the trials of the few are necessary for the sake of others, and as a preparative for doing their work on earth, and therefore are usually borne by them in early years, or at least before they have entered on that special service which Providence had assigned them.

The distinction now made may be confirmed, or at least illustrated, by referring to two distinguished characters in scripture history. The character of Job was intended as a pattern of patience in suffering affliction to all future ages. But this eminently pious person, who obtained this testimony from the mouth of God, "There is none like him," filled no official situation, and was not called to perform any service of a public kind in his generation. His life presented a picture of domestic piety, exemplified in the well-ordered economy of a flourishing family, and in the varied beneficence which wealth enabled him to diffuse around his dwelling. Thus much we gather from the brief notice prefixed to the narrative of his sufferings, taken in connection with the reminiscences of former days, which the insinuations of his over-suspicious friends called up and compelled him to reveal in his own defence. Accordingly his trials were delayed till an advanced period of his life, the fittest for displaying his integrity, and proving that it was equally independent on prosperity and adversity. It was quite otherwise as to another illustrious individual, who is generally supposed to have been contemporary with Job. Moses was destined to be the liberator of his countrymen from the cruel bondage of Egypt, to govern that "stiff and rebellious race" during forty years, in a wilderness, within a few days' march of a rich country which they had left filled with their terror, and to subject them to a code of laws which, though good and equitable, neither they nor their children were able to bear. His residence at the court of Pharaoh, his initiation into the wisdom of the Egyptians, and the practice of the arts of war and peace which he acquired during his early youth, were intended by Heaven to be subservient to his execution of its high behests. But neither these, nor his piety, nor the patriotism and generous indignation against tyranny which burned in his breast, suffered or could exempt him from passing through another education of a rougher kind, by which he might be freed from the impurities which he had contracted, and become qualified for his difficult task. It behoved him to be as many years an exile in Midian as he had been a courtier in Egypt, and was to be king in Jeshurun.

Your memory will supply you with examples from scripture which go to establish the truth of our proposition; and in particular you cannot forget "the apostle and high-priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Though without the slightest taint of sin, though anointed with the Spirit without measure, though more than a man, though the Son of God, yet it behoved him to "learn obedience by the things which he suffered." If it became the Captain of Salvation to be made perfect through sufferings, that he might lead many sons to glory, what subordinate leader can or ought to look for exemption?

To return to the person mentioned in the text—Joseph was selected to be the depositary of the secrets of Heaven and the almoner of its bounty, in "saving much people alive," during a sore and protracted dearth, and also to be the instrument of providing an asylum for his

brethren in Egypt until "the heritage of Jacob, their father," was ready for receiving them. The events which befell him were so arranged by Providence as at once to place him in circumstances to accomplish these services, and to train him for acting the part which became the patron of the chosen people, and the public benefactor of the age in which he lived.

It has often been observed, that the chosen instruments of Providence have given early indications of their high destiny, and that they or their friends have felt strong presentiments of this, which, by giving a direction to their education, and moulding their inclinations, have exerted a powerful influence on their future lives. Philosophers ascribe this to superstition, and are fond of displaying their ingenuity by tracing such impressions to external circumstances acting upon minds naturally ardent and aspiring. But the rigid eye of philosophy, clear as it is within its own range, is apt to be cold and feeble in its apprehension of moral influences in the divine government of the universe. Who made "the human face divine," and formed the spirit in man? Who assigned to individuals the age in which they should live, and their local habitation? Who brought them into contact with those circumstances which elicit thoughts and kindle feelings which otherwise would never have had an existence? Are we entitled to interrupt the Ruler of the world when employed in fashioning "the man that shall execute his counsel," and to say to him, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no farther?" May he speak to him by the whirlwind, the thunder, the earthquake, or the tumult of the people, but not by "the still small voice," inaudible by all but the ear into which it is whispered? Shall the free spirit of man be dependent on external circumstances, and liable to receive impressions from everything that is material and gross around it, and yet be independent on, and inaccessible to, the direct influences of the Father of Spirits? If this be philosophical, it sounds very like irrational, and seems to be at once derogatory to the Divine Being, and to man, whom, of all terrestrial creatures, he had formed with the capabilities of holding converse with himself.

"By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child." They perceived something divine in the preternatural beauty and expression of his countenance. Looking along the bow of the promised deliverance, they saw it resting, and its beams playing on the features of their lovely babe, and faith united with natural affection in stimulating them to preserve his life, and afterwards to watch over his education. In like manner Moses, when he came to years, and was made acquainted with his lineage and miraculous preservation, conceived the idea that he would one day be the deliverer of his enslaved countrymen.

Similar aspirations, though of a kind more congenial to his gentler dispositions, and the nature of his destined employment, were indulged by Joseph, perhaps even before God "proved his heart, and visited

him in the night" with dreams. Animated by these, schemes of future usefulness and glory would flit before his kindling fancy, and his benevolent breast would heave with the anticipated pleasure of nursing his affectionate parent in his old age, providing for his churlish but still beloved brethren, dealing bread to the hungry stranger, bringing the poor outcast into his house, scattering plenty over a barren land, and receiving the blessing of thousands ready to perish. With these feelings of his son, Jacob appears to have sympathised, and accordingly, though he rebuked him for the apparent imprudence with which he revealed his nightly visions, we are told that "he observed the saying."

In addition to the most amiable dispositions, Joseph inherited the piety which had adorned and sanctified the character of his forefathers for three successive generations. The fear of God, which his father had betimes sedulously inculcated on all his children, had, by the blessing of Heaven, taken root in the mind of Joseph, and blossomed from his tenderest years. Hence, instead of having "his good manners corrupted by the evil communications" of his elder brothers, he was grieved at their misconduct, and employed what appeared to him the best means for reclaiming them. Add to this that he had for "the guide of his youth" one who had seen affliction, and who knew what it was to incur the envy of a brother, and to suffer from the selfishness of relations, and consequently could impart to him in the most impressive manner the salutary instructions and cautions which he had learned in the hard school of adversity.

But neither his high aspirations, nor his benevolent dispositions, nor his early piety, nor the education which he had received under the eye of a parent trained in the school of adversity, could suffice to form the character of Joseph. To qualify him as "a polished shaft" in the hand of Providence, it behoved him to suffer sharper and more varied trials than any of his progenitors. Hated of his brethren, sold for a slave, falsely accused, thrown into prison, bound with irons, friendless and forgotten, "the affliction of Joseph" passed into a proverb. Before he had spent the period of youth, and while all the sensibilities of his nature were still tender, he had encountered all the storms of calamity to which the unfortunate are exposed during the course of a long life. How affecting his address to his fellow-prisoner whose restoration to liberty and honours he had predicted! "Think on me when it shall be well with thee, and show kindness, I pray thee, unto me, and make mention of me unto Pharaoh, and bring me out of this house. For indeed I was stolen away out of the land of the Hebrews; and here also I have done nothing that they should put me into the dungeon." And it behoved his soul, already sick with hope deferred, to be pierced with the keenest dart in adversity's quiver—base ingratitude. Yet of all the hardships which he underwent none was unnecessary or supererogatory. Every pang which he suffered, and every moment of his

tedious imprisonment, contributed its share to the formation of that character, which, when developed, proclaimed him to be "the minister of God for good" to the church and mankind.

Before proceeding farther, let me simply mention two things to prevent mistakes. In the *first* place, I mean not to speak of the world's worthies, some of whom have learned in adversity the hardy virtues of patience, temperance, and fortitude, and by their wisdom and patriotism have earned "a mortal immortality," but I confine myself to those men of God whose virtues are grafted on genuine piety. In the *second* place, in speaking of the advantages of affliction, I suppose it to be accompanied with the sanctifying blessing of him who sent it, and thus yielding "the peaceable fruits of righteousness in those who are exercised thereby." Without this it would depress instead of invigorating the mind, irritate the passions instead of subduing them, and harden instead of improving the heart. Without this even the good would be tempted to murmur against Providence, "put forth their hand to iniquity," and have recourse to dishonest and dishonourable expedients to extricate themselves from calamities and straits by which they were "pressed above measure." I now go on to speak of the advantages to be derived from adversity.

I. It is a school for acquiring practical wisdom. When we are in eager pursuit of this world's enjoyments we have no leisure for serious reflection—when we have obtained these our minds are unfitted for it, and, though the price is in our hands, we have no heart to buy wisdom. Adversity has a tendency to sober the mind, disperses the illusions which prosperity had created, and induces thoughtfulness and meditation. He who bears the yoke in his youth sitteth alone and is silent, searches and tries his ways, and applies his heart to wisdom.

Practical wisdom comprehends two things—the knowledge of ourselves and of others, and both of these are most advantageously acquired in adversity.

How ignorant are even good men of themselves before they are put to the trial! How ready to mistake their character, to be deceived as to the motives by which they are actuated, and to overrate their talents and the strength of their principles! How apt to think they are something when they are nothing, and to expose themselves rashly to temptation! Happy was it for Peter that his grand trial was over, and that the secrets of his heart were revealed to him before he was called to take a leading part in the propagation of the Gospel, and to appear before kings and rulers for the name of Christ! It is true we would not be such strangers to ourselves if we listened to faithful counsel, and subjected our hearts to the test of an impartial and rigid self-examination. But still there is no knowledge like to that which is gained by experience, and no experience like that which is the result of tribulation. By encountering hardships we discover where our weakness lies,

and in what quarter we are most vulnerable by the shafts of temptation—whether we are in greater danger of failing, in the hour of trial, from love to the world, timidity, a sense of shame, impatience, anger, unbelief, pride, or vainglory. The person who has been involved in “a sea of troubles,” where “deep calleth unto deep,” and one billow succeeds to another, is made to feel his weakness, and to exclaim—Ah !—

“ This is no flattery ; these are counsellors
That feelingly persuade me what I am.”

Next to self-knowledge, an intimate and accurate acquaintance with the characters of other men is of the greatest utility to those who are called to be “workers together with God.” The knowledge of our own hearts offers us important aid in the study of human nature ; but a person of conscious integrity and generous dispositions will meet with cruel disappointments in the estimates which he has formed on this standard. How much levity, inconstancy, and falsehood—how much hypocrisy, ingratitude, and treachery—are laid open by a change to the worse in our external circumstances ! “A friend,” says the old proverb, “is not known in prosperity ; and an enemy cannot be hidden in adversity.” Nor is insincerity the only shelf which we need to avoid.

Moses, when he first felt the fire of sacred patriotism stirring his breast, was inclined to undertake the vindication of his countrymen’s liberties forthwith, without waiting for an express commission, and began with avenging the wrong which he saw done by an Egyptian to a Hebrew, fondly supposing that his brethren would have understood, from the boldness of the action, that God, by his hand, would deliver them. But the incident which happened next day convinced him that he who would undertake the task must lay his account with as great obstacles from the folly of the oppressed, as from the fury of the oppressor. This was a lesson he had not learnt in the schools of Egypt ; he had leisure to reflect on it during his subsequent exile ; and was thus prepared for encountering the ignorance, the incredulity, the selfishness, the stubbornness, displayed by Israel in the wilderness.

The same benefit did Joseph reap from his adversities. In the short account given of his early years, we see great goodness of heart combined with an unsuspecting openness, which, if not corrected by experience, would have made him through life the prey of the malicious, or the dupe of the designing. After he had reached his seventeenth year, we find him, with a child-like, and almost infantile, simplicity, relating to his brethren those dreams, which, as plainly pointing to his future exaltation over them, tended to inflame that hatred which the partiality of his father, and his own virtues, had already excited in their breast. Though made aware of their envy, still he could never have supposed that such cruelty dwelt in their hearts, as he found in the day of “the anguish of his soul, when he entreated them, and they would not hear him.” This discovery, together with those made by his treat-

ment in the house of Potiphar, and in prison, were blessed for curing him of his early infirmity, and for "giving subtilty to the simple, to the young man knowledge and discretion;" so that when he was released, Pharaoh found him qualified to administer the affairs of his kingdom, and to "teach his senators wisdom." Without having recourse to supernatural communications, it is surprising what knowledge of human character a mind disciplined, but not broken, by adversity, will acquire in circumstances not the most propitious; although indeed Joseph had the advantage of contemplating human nature in various aspects, and conversed with all classes, from the first military officer to a common turnkey, from those who had been in king's courts to the most degraded inmate of a jail. And, though the comparison may not be deemed flattering, what is the administration of a kingdom but the economy of a family, combined with the discipline of a prison on a larger scale?

While intercourse with the world soon corrects that credulous simplicity to which the young and inexperienced are incident, this advantage is usually gained at the expense of better principles. But the piety and benevolence of Joseph prevented the knowledge which he acquired from swelling into misanthropic pride, or degenerating into worldly policy and cunning. In his character, as unfolded in his mature age, and after it had gone through the severe process of refinement, we behold a rare example of the union of genuine goodness with consummate prudence—the wisdom of the serpent matched with the harmlessness of the dove. We are accustomed to speak of his *policy* to stay his brethren; and on the occasion referred to, he certainly did display an address and fineness of management, which, in other hands, would have been perverted to effectuate the worst of purposes, "like a sharp razor working deceitfully." But the policy of Joseph was dictated by the purest motives, and directed to the best of ends. The difficulty which we feel in reconciling some of his expressions to the strict laws of truth, is perhaps not greater than that which we find, at first sight, in reconciling some parts of his conduct to the principles of filial affection, which yet we know he felt very strongly. An enlightened sense of duty, and a conscientious regard to the high obligations imposed on him as the confidential servant of Pharaoh, and minister of Providence, restrained him from taking earlier measures to acquaint his father with the honours to which he had been raised. The substantial acts of kindness which he did to his brethren, and his turning from them, once and again, to give vent to the tide of affection which rushed to his eyes, showed the violence which he did to his feelings, while he constrained himself to wear the mask of severity, with the view of correcting the vices to which he knew them to be addicted, and preparing their minds for the happiness he had planned for them. How much knowledge of human nature, joined to considerate love, was wrapt up in his admonition, on dismissing them laden with good news and presents,—“See that ye fall not out by the way.” We find the same virtuous prudence in the

measures he adopted for obtaining them a commodious settlement in the district of Goshen ; by which he secured them against incurring the hatred of the Egyptians, and provided at the same time for their retaining their pastoral simplicity of manners, together with the pure religion of their fathers. Nor must we overlook the wise and liberal policy which he pursued in his treatment of the native population, now at the mercy of their sovereign, who, by listening to his advice, or rather to the counsel of Heaven communicated by him, was in exclusive possession of the necessaries of life. According to the maxims of policy at that time established in all the great monarchies of the world, the people must have become the slaves of the prince, bound to the soil, and condemned to labour it for an absolute lord. While he showed all fidelity to the interests of his royal master, Joseph provided wisely for those of the people. Instead of allowing them to eat the bread of idleness during the seven years in which it was fruitless to till the ground, he removed them to cities where they could acquire useful arts, and in the last year of the dearth, he furnished such as chose a country life, with seed corn, and gave them back their lands on a new tenure, which reserved to the crown a fifth part of their produce ; an arrangement (corresponding to the double tithe afterwards established among the Israelites) which displayed the wisdom and impartiality of a Heaven-chosen umpire, balancing the claims of sovereign and subjects, giving to the former all the advantage which a virtuous individual is entitled to expect from his prudent foresight, while he took care that the latter should not be reduced to slavery in consequence of a calamity which, but for a divine premonition, would have proved ruinous to both ; and by the standing law which he procured on the occasion, leaving a memorable lesson to the people of the benefits of forecast and economy, and to princes, of a wise moderation in the use of power, and a disinterested regard to the welfare of their subjects.

Do you ask, whence had this young man all this wisdom ? and where did he learn it ? I answer, not in a palace, but in the pit of Dothan ; not in a council of senators, but in a caravansery of Ishmeelitish slave-traders ; not under the arched roof of a college, but within the gloomy walls and dark cells of a dungeon. The philosophers of Greece and Asia were accustomed to travel into Egypt in quest of wisdom ; but what was all the occult science and abstruse speculation which they learnt, by conversing with its priests, and deciphering its hieroglyphical symbols, compared with the sound practical knowledge which Joseph acquired in its prisons, by ruminating on the ways of God to man, and examining the secret springs and multiform movements of the human heart ?

II. Adversity is useful for subduing and regulating the passions. He who is not emancipated from the slavery of his passions cannot be either truly great or truly good. Without this, knowledge is like a

sharp instrument in the hands of a furious person, which only enables him to do the more mischief to himself or others ; and benevolence is like a wandering star, or a cloud without water, carried about of winds. Self-government is an essential qualification for ruling over others. How can he take the lead of others, who is himself like a vessel without a rudder, the sport of wind and waves, and filled moreover with combustible materials, ready every moment to take fire ? The subjugation of the passions is one of the greatest conquests of religion, in the achieving of which this divine principle does not disdain to call in the aid of the corrective discipline of Providence. While prosperity inflames the passions by multiplying the objects of their gratification, adversity allays their ardour by blowing away or burning up what ministers fuel to them. Under its "iron scourge," and during its "torturing hour," the fiercest breast is tamed temporarily, is made to hear the voice of reason and conscience ; and from the privations which he is forced to suffer, the patient is taught the practicability and usefulness of self-denial and voluntary restraint.

The grand practical difficulty in education, and that which attaches to every system of moral culture discovered by human ingenuity, is to hit the due medium between restraint and indulgence, or rather to combine the two modes of treatment in such just proportion as to form the character to virtue. If you pursue the plan of restraint, you either break the spirit of your pupil, or you create habits of cunning and dissimulation. In the former case, you have an Issachar—an ass crouching down between two burdens : in the latter case, you have a Dan—a serpent by the way, biting the horse's heels, so that the rider falleth backwards. If you have recourse to the opposite plan of indulgence, you either give loose reins to youthful passion, or else you foster vanity by bribing the more violent principles to rest. In the former case, you have a Reuben, who, unstable as water, shall not excel ; in the latter case, you have a character such as Joseph was when he was taken from the hands of his father, and who, notwithstanding his goodness, had provoked the resentment of all his brethren, with the exception of the individual who had been trained in the same easy school with himself. The history of education in many families exhibits little else than the alternate adoption of these opposite methods in regular succession. Even when we have placed the golden mean before our eyes, how ready are we to err from it in practice ! To "correct, but with judgment," to soften the severity of reproof with the precious oil of kindness, and to adapt the degree of restraint or indulgence to the temper and disposition of the individual, is a delicate task for which few tutors, natural or delegated, are qualified, and which at the best can be but imperfectly executed by "men of like passions" with those who are placed under their tuition and government.

The discipline of Providence is not pressed with these difficulties. For, in the first place, under the corrections of Heaven, we feel ourselves

smitten by an invisible hand, which we can neither resist nor escape. The most irreligious have been awed into submission by the visitations of the Almighty, and the stoutest heart has been made to quail at the thunder of his power. "It is the Lord." "Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth : woe unto him that striveth with his Maker." In the second place, the consideration of the equity and goodness of the Ruler of the Universe composes the mind, and prepares it for reaping benefit from his severest corrections. We sometimes find this impression partially made on those reprobate characters who have "sold themselves to work wickedness." "Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me?" But it produces its full effect on those who are under the habitual influence of the fear of God. Reverencing his judgments, they are excited to search and try their ways, humble themselves under his mighty hand, and own that he hath punished them less than their iniquities have deserved. The reverence we feel for the best "fathers of our flesh" must suffer an abatement from our consciousness that during the "few years" that we were under their authority, they not unfrequently corrected us "after their own pleasure," at the irregular and capricious call of passion ; but the shadow of this infirmity never passes over the impartial eye of the Father of spirits. Even when his inflictions proceed immediately from men, and in this view are unmerited, the godly person recognises the secret direction of a higher hand, and thus is preserved from those embittered feelings which would have been fatal to his improvement. "Let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him." In the third place, the discipline of God is administered with infinite wisdom, combined with the most compassionate tenderness. He adapts the remedy to the disease ; and never treats one case exactly as he treats another. While "he is wise, and will not hold back his hand" until his salutary object is gained, he is merciful, and will not crush the prisoners of the earth, nor afflict beyond what they are able to bear. "In measure," when their corruption "shooteth up, he will debate with it ; he stayeth his rough wind in the day of his east wind ;" he acts like a skilful physician, who, when he finds it necessary to prescribe a severe course of cathartics, judiciously administers at intervals an emollient or a gentle opiate, to allay irritation, and recruit the exhausted strength of his patient. This is beautifully illustrated by "the affliction of Joseph." He was first thrown into great anguish by the apprehension that his brothers meant to take away his life, from which his being sold to the Ishmeelites was a relief. After being subjected to the drudgery and indignities of a slave, he was raised to a reputable situation in the house of his master. When thrown into a dungeon, God gave him favour in the eyes of his keeper, who released him from the galling fetters with which he was bound, and treated him with all the honours of which a prison admitted. The despondency which a tedious imprisonment, without

any prospect of release, is apt to engender, was warded off by the incident of Pharaoh's officers. And at last, when the hopes which he had formed from the gratitude of the chief butler, after the expiry of two long years of forgetfulness, were about to give up the ghost, "the king sent and loosed him, even the ruler of the people set him free." "Lo ! these are parts of his ways." And those who are well instructed in divine history, and have been attentive observers of Providence, can easily add to their number.

Every one has his ruling passion, by which he is ready to be brought into bondage, in consequence of his being constitutionally addicted to it, or placed in circumstances which expose him to its attacks. Softness and effeminacy, cherished by the ease of pastoral life, and a fondness for the fine arts, appear to have been the besetting sins of David. If he had been left to his own inclinations, and to choose his lot, he would have occupied himself in "inventing instruments of music, chanting to the sound of the viol, and (if he had risen to rank) lying on beds of ivory, drinking wine out of bowls, and anointing himself with the chief ointments." This love of ease and pleasure must have quenched any higher feelings in his breast, and disqualified him for governing a great and warlike nation. But it was corrected by the wise arrangements of Providence, placing him in a situation in which he learned to "scorn delights, and live laborious days," and was trained, amidst hardships and perils, to self-denial, temperance, fortitude, and vigilance. The education which Moses received at the court of Pharaoh was calculated to increase his native elation of spirit, prompting to daring and generous deeds, but marked with precipitation and haughtiness. During his forty years' exile, his pride was subdued, his zeal was tempered by self-command, he was qualified for interposing between the haughty tyrant and the helpless victims of his oppression ; and "now the man Moses was meek above all the men which were upon the face of the earth." Vanity appears to have been the vice to which Joseph was most addicted, or under the dominion of which he was in the greatest danger of falling. His personal beauty, his early endowments, the dreams of future glory which haunted his pillow, his father's partiality, and even his brethren's envy, had all a tendency to feed a passion so natural to the youthful breast. Had it not been checked, who can say into what follies, or even vices, it would have betrayed him ? If he had been suddenly raised to honour, or had he fallen into the hands of artful and interested flatterers, the counsellor of Pharaoh might have turned out a courtly coxcomb, and the favourite son of Jacob a spoiled child of larger growth. But the sore and repeated humiliations he met with not only mortified but subdued his vanity, so that when he was exalted in due time, he was able to bear all the honours heaped on him with meek and humble dignity, not for personal ostentation, but to the glory of God and the good of mankind.

It is one of the greatest proofs of the advantages resulting from sanctified affliction, that it sometimes produces such a change on the temper and dispositions of a man, as to render it extremely difficult to discover the vice to which he was originally inclined. To those who had known Moses only from the time that he undertook the conduct of Israel, what a surprise must it have been when they witnessed him at Rephidim smiting the rock violently, and crying, "Hear, ye rebels; must we bring you water from the rock?" Ah! that was a flash, produced by a sudden temptation reaching, in an unguarded moment, the remains of an old fire, long smothered, but not yet extinct.

III. Affliction, while it purifies and strengthens the higher, serves to improve the softer qualities of the mind. To fit a person for great deeds, he must possess the hardy virtues of patience and constancy, and the nobler qualities of disinterested devotion to the public, and an independence of mind raising him above the mastery of external circumstances. Without these there can be no patriotism, sacred or secular. Not to tax your patience, I shall confine the illustration to one of the qualities mentioned, which, in its pure and unalloyed state, is more precious than the gold of Uphaz. Selfishness is one of the most subtle principles in our nature, and appears under a great variety of modifications. It is not so difficult to find persons who are elevated above the servile fear of danger, and the sordid love of gain; but how rare the man of whom it can be truly said, that he is "good without show, above ambition great!" The storm which overtook the fugitive prophet, and engulfed him in a living grave, set him free from the fear of man, but not from that selfishness which led him to conceive a mortal chagrin at the supposed discredit reflected on his ministry by the clemency of Heaven. To purify their minds from this alloy, Providence causes its elect ones to pass through the furnace of affliction, and it is not until they have suffered a series of keen disappointments, and humiliating reverses, that, extricated from "the last infirmity of noble souls," they mount to the region of pure and disinterested benevolence. Repeatedly baulked, as Joseph was, in their most sanguine hopes, stript of all in which they boasted, cut off from all whom they loved, and cast off by all in whom they confided; deserted, betrayed, persecuted; they are made to feel the vanity and deceitfulness of the world, and their souls are disenchanted and disenthralled from its fairest and most fascinating allurements. Its applause is as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal to him who has experienced its hollowness and insincerity. Its sweetest incense is insipid, yea nauseous, to him who has seen it lavished on the most worthless, or who has himself felt its intoxicating and deleterious effects. Shall he court or feed upon the airy, light, inconstant, deceitful, polluted breath of public favour, whose heart yet aches from the reproaches with which it has been broken—whose face still reddens with the recollection of the shame which covered it—whose best actions

have been calumniated—his purest motives misrepresented—and his most unfeigned professions branded as hypocrisy and a lie ! O, no ! his soul has escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler, and is already in mid-heaven, and, still looking upward, scents celestial odours, and seeks the honour that cometh from God only.

But sanctified affliction, while it raises the person above all that is low and earthy in his motives, does not incapacitate him for acting his part on earth, or for mingling with suffering and erring mortals. He comes out of tribulation a nobler being, but still a human being. It has taught him that he is a man, and to look upon nothing that flesh is heir to as foreign or indifferent to him. While it hardens the soul to virtue, it softens the heart, and melts it to pity and love. In this manner was Joseph qualified for being the almoner to the famished Egyptians, the protector of his brethren, and the tender nurse of his aged parent. He “knew the heart of a stranger,” and what it was to be in straits, and suspected, and falsely accused, and treated as a felon ; and, therefore, he felt sensitively and strongly for such as were in these circumstances. This appears from the whole of his conduct to his unnatural brothers, but from no part of it so much as that which succeeded the burial of Jacob ; when, dreading that, after that event, he might resent their former cruelty to him, they sent a deputation to him to say that their father, before his decease, had charged them, in his name, to beg forgiveness of their trespass. “Joseph WEPT when they spake unto him.” The drops that fell from his eyes at this time were more precious indications of a tender heart than all the tears with which he bedewed the necks of his brethren when he made himself known to them. “Ah ! my brethren, you know not that you now wound my heart more deeply than did all your unkindness at Dothan. Forgive your trespass ? That I cannot now do. It was done long ago ; and the deed was ratified on that day when, unknown to you, I listened to your penitential confession, since which time the trace of the offence has not passed across my remembrance except in thanksgivings to Him who overruled it for good to me and to you.” So saying, he “comforted his brethren, and spake kindly to them.” And as he did so, his “stern rugged nurse”¹ dropped a tear on her favourite child, and she turned not aside to hide it.

But, my friends, I would have given you a partial view of the character of Joseph, and concealed one important element that enters into the characters of all who belong to the same class, unless I added, as I now do,

In the *last* place—that sanctified adversity produces strong confidence in God. We find Joseph, from the first time he is introduced to our notice, acting under the influence of the fear of God ; but this filial fear grew, in the course of his trials, into unshaken confidence in the favour and help of the Almighty. He had been in deaths oft ; but he who

¹ Gray's Ode to Adversity.

had shown him great and sore troubles, quickened him again, and brought him again from "the depths of the earth." The depth of the distresses into which he was plunged had the effect of disengaging him from the vain confidence which he was apt to place in himself or in other men; the height of his deliverances confirmed his confidence in that divine arm which had been so visibly displayed in his behalf. To this we find the venerable patriarch referring when he poured his dying benediction on the head of Joseph, and the crown of the head of him that was separated from his brethren:—"The archers sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him; but his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob, who kept watch around the stone of Israel."

It is this high but well-grounded confidence which has raised the characters of those illustrious men whose names are enrolled in the inspired records or in the pages of the faithful history of the church, who have done, and dared, and suffered, and sacrificed so much for the honour of God and the best interests of mankind.

This divine principle is the basis upon which are reared that patience, and constancy, and fortitude, and courage, and magnanimity which have risen above all Greek, above all Roman fame. It imparts to those who possess it a strength of mind beyond that which constitutionally belongs to them. It arms them with omnipotence itself; for, in everything to which they are called, they are "strong in the Lord and the power of his might." And though clothed with humility, and ready to acknowledge they are nothing, yet through Christ strengthening them they can do, and dare, and suffer everything for the glory of God and the salvation of men. Such were those "who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens."¹ And such was he who could say, "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me.—Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me."²

From this subject we may see—

1. One way in which Providence authenticates the call of its chosen ministers. It is not enough to warrant a person to undertake a public service, especially of an arduous and extraordinary kind, nor is it enough to warrant others to countenance him in undertaking it, that he feels a strong inclination to the work. This, allowing that it proceeds from the purest motives, may be enthusiastic, or founded on a very mistaken estimate of his gifts. There is a course of preparation which persons must go through to fit them for the occupation to which they are destined; and that is the completest course which is practical as well as didactic. Luther, no doubt with a special regard to the circumstances of his own

¹ Heb. xi. 33, 34.

² 2 Tim. iv. 16, 17.

time, but not exclusively, makes one of the three qualifications for a preacher of the Gospel to be *temptation*, an art which is not to be acquired in any college or hall of divinity. The advocates of the papacy were accustomed to press the reformers on the legitimacy of their vocation to the work which they had undertaken, and tauntingly asked them to produce the proofs which the apostles gave. Little did they consider that the men whom they reviled and resisted, without pretending to be apostles, had one of the signs of apostleship on which great stress is laid in the New Testament, both by them and him that sent them. "He is a chosen vessel," said the Lord to Ananias, who scrupled to go in to Saul of Tarsus, "to bear my name to the Gentiles; for I will show him how great things he shall suffer for my name." "Are they ministers of Christ?" said the same person to those who "sought a proof of Christ speaking by him," and preferred his detractors. "I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes beyond measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft." This is the test to which their divine Master puts their qualifications; and their enduring it is the stamp of his approbation. He "causes them to pass through fire and water." This is *the judgment of God*, for which men, in the dark ages, mistook the symbols. In this way the self-indulgent, the effeminate, the feeble-minded, as well as the faithless and false-hearted—the lovers of ease and honour, as well as the lovers of wealth and pleasure, are detected and separated from those choice and resolute spirits who are prepared to do, and suffer, and sacrifice everything for God and public good. If when brought to the mouth of the furnace they blanch and become pale, if they look back or look strange on the fiery trial, they are not fit for their high and heavenly calling. "Every one shall be salted with fire." One is required to part with worldly goods, and becomes sorrowful—"the Lord hath refused him." Another is required to part with friends, and thinks it a hard saying—"neither hath the Lord chosen him." Another shrinks from pain, another from shame, another from death—"the Lord hath not chosen these." But is there one who, when brought to the trial, is "moved by none of those things?" "Arise, anoint him: for this is he."¹ The enduring of affliction is the impress of Heaven, set on the objects of its choice; the seal appended to the commission of those to whom it has delegated its powers of dispensing good. It is at once the warrant to the delegate, and his answer to all challengers. "Henceforth let no man trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus."

2. One reason why there are no great men in our time—there have been no great trials. We have been born, we have been reared, we have lived, each under his vine and his fig-tree, none making us afraid. "No temptation hath happened to us but what is common to men;" and, therefore, we are common men and common Christians, common statesmen and common churchmen. We have men of great talents, but not

of great characters ; of enlarged, or rather improved understandings, but of little souls. So far from being lifted above the more refined and spiritualised selfishness of the world, it is rarely, and with difficulty, that we rise above its grosser atmosphere. How far inferior, in point of self-denial and devotedness, of faith and patience, of firmness and resolution, of noble daring, and still nobler doing and enduring, to those patriots, confessors, and martyrs, to whom, under God, we owe our religion and liberties, and (what many among us value more highly than these) our knowledge and science. We flatter ourselves that we could teach them and correct them ; but O how we would have marred that great work which they achieved ! They were men, and they had their faults, and there is no sanctity about their faults, rendering it unlawful to point them out ; but let us remember, that it is one thing to *perceive* them and another thing to *judge* of them ; for this last requires that we be able to take the altitude and circumference of those virtues with which they are connected. What renders a pigmy hunch-backed, would be but a small wen on a giant. We should also recollect that we are in danger of falling into the error of the tyro in the use of the telescope, who fancied he had discovered a new spot in the sun when it was only a speck of dust which he had unskilfully left on the lens of his instrument.

But let us not, in attempting to do justice to those men whom Providence has honoured to be instruments of good to mankind, forget ourselves and our duty. There is no degree of purity, or strength of piety, to which any may have attained by the aid of corrective discipline, which is not incumbent on us ; for we are bound to love the Lord our God with all our hearts, and our neighbours as ourselves. But we have to do with a being of infinite wisdom and mercy, who, in carrying on his plan of recovering us from the misery of our natural state, graciously accepts us in his beloved Son according to the improvement we make of the means which we enjoy, forgives our failures, and helps our infirmities. Let your aims be high, though you should come short of the mark. Think upon those ancients who have obtained a good report, and recollect that, great as they were in some respects, "God hath provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." O, what obligations lie upon us as Christians, as Protestants, and as British Protestants ! Consider yourselves as almoners not only of the temporal, but also of the spiritual bounties of Providence. Remember that Joseph was raised up, not only to provide a habitation for his father's house, but to save much people alive in the land of Egypt and in all the surrounding countries. Think on the magnanimous sentiment which was committed to writing in a tent-maker's shop in Corinth, and sent by Phœbe, a female member of the church at Cenchrea : "I am debtor, both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise : so, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the Gospel to you

that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth ; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.”¹

In fine, my friends, has God exempted you from afflictions ? Sympathise with those who suffer, as being yourselves in the body ; and remembering that you have more need of liberal communications from the Spirit of all grace to preserve you from temptation, pray to God without ceasing, “ that ye may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that ye may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.”

¹ Rom. i. 14—16.

SERMON IV.

CHRISTIAN FRIENDSHIP.

"The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: but, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me. The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day: and in how many things he ministered unto me at Ephesus, thou knowest very well."—2 TIM. i. 16-18.

Of all the circumstances which accompany adversity, none give more acute pain to a person of sensibility and generous mind than the unkindness and desertion of friends. His distress on that account does not arise so much from the loss of the assistance and advice, or even of the society and sympathy of those on whom he had been wont to rely, although he feels this sensibly, but it arises chiefly from those dark and gloomy views of human nature with which the infidelity of friends is apt to fill the soul, inducing the deceived individual to dread the most sincere professions, and sometimes shaking his reliance on Providence itself. Such feelings are peculiarly apt to be excited in his breast by the violation of those friendships which were consecrated by religion, and in which the parties had become bound to one another by pledging their common faith to a higher Power. In this case, his firmest confidences being uprooted, and his holiest affections cheated, he feels at the same time desolate and oppressed—he feels as if all things were moved from their foundations, and "the earth, with all the inhabitants thereof, were dissolving," while he labours to "bear up the pillars of it." Such appears to have been the state of the Psalmist's mind, and he mentions it as the acme of his trouble when he describes these words as bursting from him in the haste and agitation of his spirit, "All men are liars." It was in a paroxysm produced by this cause that Jeremiah cursed the day of his birth. And hence also another prophet was led to exclaim in strains which partook more of the bitterness of grief than of anger: "Woe is me! The good man is perished out of the earth, and there is none upright among men. The best of them is as a brier, the most upright is sharper than a thorn-hedge. Trust ye not in a friend, put ye not confidence in a guide." The minds of the best and most pious of men would be overset by this temptation, if they were left to their own

resolution and reflections. But God is faithful, and will not suffer them to be tempted beyond what they are able to bear; he tempers the severity of their trial, and in his wisdom provides such external means as he knows to be best calculated to restore their peace of mind and re-establish their confidence. And who can express the delight which they feel in this deliverance! How joyfully they shake off the damps which oppressed them—while their relieved spirits rise, like a bird which has escaped from the snare, to their native element of unbounded confidence, expressed in gratulations and in prayers poured out for those who have been the honoured instruments of effecting their rescue—let the words of the apostle which we have read to you declare.

Few minds have been so formed for relishing and imparting the refined and elevated enjoyments of Christian friendship as that of Paul. This is apparent, to mention no other proofs at present, from the tender manner in which he salutes those with whom he had formed a sacred intimacy in the different places which he had visited, and the evident pleasure with which he transmits, in his letters to them, the salutations of those who surrounded him. It is observable that these are most numerous in his earlier epistles, and that they become rare in those which he wrote towards the close of his apostolical career: Not surely that this holy affection burned with abated ardour in his breast, but because the objects of it were diminished. As he approached the termination of his course, and as his sufferings increased and his danger became greater and more imminent, he found the ranks of his friends gradually thinned, until at last he was left to stand and fight the good fight alone. To this he repeatedly alludes with deep feeling, but at the same time with a composure which shows that he had overcome the distress which it once gave him, in this epistle to his beloved son Timothy, written during his second imprisonment at Rome, and only a short time before the martyrdom which he endured there for the name of Christ. "All they that are in Asia be turned away from me," says he. "Only Luke is with me. At my first answer no man stood by me, but all men forsook me." The selfishness, inconstancy, and cowardice, which were thus brought to light, could not but wound the spirit of Paul; but the wound was healed. Though cast down he was not dispirited—though deserted by his friends he was not left destitute. He could say with his divine Master, that, though they left him alone, yet was he not alone, and he felt no lack. "All men forsook me—nevertheless the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, and I was delivered from the mouth of the lion." At the bar of the Emperor he was enabled to "open his mouth boldly" in confessing and pleading the cause of Christ; and when remanded to his prison, and when his timid friends in Rome stood aloof from him, the compassionate Master whom he served brought from a distance a friend whose seasonable and divinely arranged visit banished every remains of gloom from his mind, and inspired him with fresh alacrity for the approaching crisis of the

combat. When Paul had landed in Italy, some of his brethren in Rome came out to meet him, "whom when Paul saw, he thanked God, and took courage."¹ How ravishing to salute dear friends after escaping from the perils of a storm! And, amidst the wreck of our friendships, when, on first recovering from the shock which it produced, we thought of opening our eyes on blank desolation, how reviving to find standing by our side one friend whom we had not seen for a long period of time, but who had never lost sight of us, and who, heaven-directed, had flown as on angel wings to succour and comfort us! One "friend who loveth at all times," and whose visits are paid in the season of adversity, is sufficient to compensate for the loss, if loss it can be called, of ten thousand of those giddy pretenders to friendship who buzzed about our ears in the noon of prosperity, whom the slight shower brushed away, and who, in spite of all our caution, left upon us the spots of their vain and vitiating flattery. Such a friend Paul found in Onesiphorus. From the manner in which it is here mentioned, we perceive that the kind visit and Christian conversation of this friend had left a fragrance behind him which continued still to refresh the spirits and cheer the solitude of the apostle. He dismisses the Asiatic deserters with a single sentence: but having mentioned the name of Onesiphorus, he did not know how to break off; so much did his heart overflow with gratitude and affection to his ancient and steady benefactor.

In point of expression and structure this episode possesses great beauty, not that which consists in the choice and arrangement of words, but a beauty which art in its highest finishings cannot reach—the impress of the moral and religious feeling which dictated it. The breaks and the repeated changes in the form of address forcibly depict the feelings of the writer—the eagerness and impatience which he felt to express his gratitude to that good man who had shown that he was not ashamed of the cross of Christ, nor of himself, his prisoner and champion, at a time when so many timid and worldly professors had deserted both. It is a rare example (the only one I know) of prayer and narrative, an address to God and to men intermingled, and in which the familiarity used with the latter does not diminish in the slightest degree the reverence due to the former, who "will have mercy and not sacrifice." He begins with an address to Heaven in behalf of his friend's family: "The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus." But he interrupts this solemn address to acquaint Timothy with the obligations which he was under to him: "For he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain; but when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me." He then resumes his prayer for him in still more solemn and fervent accents: "The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord at that day." And he concludes by adverting to his early kindness and benefactions with which Timothy was already

¹ Acts, xxviii. 15.

well acquainted : "And in how many things he ministered to me at Ephesus thou knowest very well." Here, my brethren, you have two portraits drawn with the same pencil and by the same strokes ; and it is difficult to say which is most worthy of being admired and imitated—the Christian beneficence and constancy of Onesiphorus, or the Christian gratitude and piety of Paul. Let us contemplate each of them for a little.

I. Of the conduct of Onesiphorus.

This benevolent Christian was an inhabitant of Ephesus, and a member of the church there. Like many of his fellow-citizens, he most probably "owed his own self" to the apostle ; and he testified his love to the Gospel, and his gratitude to his spiritual instructor, by ministering to him liberally of his substance during the time that he preached in that city. It appears from Paul's farewell address to the elders of the church at Ephesus, that, with the view of not being burdensome to them, he had laboured with his own hands for his support.¹ But as his labours were interrupted by public teaching, and by persecution, an opportunity was afforded to benevolent individuals to relieve him from straits, which, although his fortitude and self-denial would have enabled him to bear them, could not have failed to distress his mind, and to hinder him in the discharge of his official duty. In imparting this relief, Onesiphorus had distinguished himself, being, as is most likely, a person in good or opulent circumstances. Though the apostle did "not desire a gift," and had learned to "suffer need," as well as to "abound," yet he "desired fruit to abound to the account" of those among whom he laboured. Hence he "rejoiced in the Lord greatly" that "the care" which the Christians at Philippi showed him, at their first acquaintance, had "flourished again" after a season of suspension ; and he calls the things which were sent from them, "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God."² On this account it "refreshed" him to recollect the kindness with which Onesiphorus had treated him at Ephesus. He does not tell us in *how many* things he had ministered to him. This it would not have been easy for him to do, if it had been necessary. In how many ways, my brethren, may we serve others, and contribute to their comfort, even though our means be slender and scanty ! Nameless, countless are the kindnesses performed by a zealous and vigilant benevolence, exerting itself in the spirit and after the example of Him who "prevents us with blessings of goodness manifold !" It is not the magnitude or costliness of gifts that proves the goodness of the donor, or does most good to the recipient ; it is their number, their repetition, their seasonableness, and the considerate and delicate manner in which they are conferred. The goodness of Heaven, in nature and in grace, steals upon us, and its choicest blessings descend in drops so small as not to

¹ Acts, xx. 33—35.

² Philip. iv. 10—18.

be perceived, and with such gentleness as scarcely to be felt. Largesses may be bestowed in such a way as to chill the heart and lacerate the feelings, while small and comparatively inconsiderable favours drop like the rain, and distil like the dew, which refresh and saturate the earth.

The early beneficence of Onesiphorus was not forgotten by Paul. But what he was most desirous to record, was the kindness he had lately shown him in Rome. In the many proofs of affection which he had formerly given, he had "done virtuously;" but this last "excelled them all." And wherein did its surpassing excellence lie? It proved him to be a friend indeed; one who "sticketh closer than a brother." A person may be capable of deeds both disinterested and generous—romantically generous, and yet he may want that quality without which he is not entitled to the sacred name of friend. Constancy is the cardinal, the crowning property of friendship, the only inimitable and imperishable impress of its genuineness. Though a man should be willing to give all his goods to feed another, yea, and his body to be burned for him, yet if he is liable to be fickle and changeable in his attachments, he is no friend,—he cannot be depended on. And here it is, my brethren, that the professions of regard and friendship which abound in the world fail, and are found to be nought. Behold this have I found, counting one by one to find out the account, which yet my soul seeketh, but I find not: One man that is generous and disinterested among a thousand have I found; but a man that is constant and unalterable among all those have I not found. True friendship keeps pace with time; changes not with the changes of fortune; sinks not with the opinion of the world; rises superior to offences; views its object with the same unaltered eye through the atmosphere of good report and of bad report, in the light of honour, and under the cloud of disgrace. A man may grow old, and his visage and form be completely altered, he may fall into poverty and under reproach, he may incur the odium of mankind, and see reason to be displeased with his own conduct; but he cannot hate or forget himself; and as he is, so is his friend, who, in this respect, partakes of his personal identity. Paul continued to be the same to Onesiphorus that he had been on the first day of their acquaintance,—the same at Rome as at Ephesus,—the same when deserted as when surrounded by his followers,—the same when a despised prisoner as when an applauded preacher,—the same when chained with criminals as when seated among apostles on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

It is not said that he came to Rome for the express purpose of visiting the apostle. Christianity does not require such works of supererogation; nor are such romantic deeds of generosity necessary to the maintenance of Christian friendship. However much Paul was gratified at seeing his old friend, he would have been displeased, we may venture to say, if he had undertaken such a journey merely for his personal gratification. It was enough that, being in Rome, he did not forget his revered

teacher, now the prisoner of the Lord, but sought him out very diligently, and visited him oft.

"I was in prison, and ye came unto me," is the top of the climax in that beautiful description which our Saviour gives of those who shall be acknowledged as his friends at the last day, and to which he subjoins this explanation, "inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." This was a stronger proof of friendship than giving him meat when he was hungry, or drink when he was athirst; and it was the only proof which, in the circumstances stated, could be sustained. If Onesiphorus had made some inquiries after Paul, but on finding it difficult to discover the place of his confinement, had desisted from them, and left with some member of the Roman church his affectionate salutations to the apostle, together with a sum of money to support him in prison, think you, my brethren, that this would have been accepted as a sufficient token of regard, or that it would have refreshed the soul of the prisoner? Verily no. In that case Paul would have been disposed to reply to his message in the words which a poet has put into the mouth of a female mentioned in the New Testament,—*"Visit me, and retain thy gifts."* The present would have been regarded as an affront, and the salutations as a renunciation of friendship. Nothing, we may be sure, which was needful to relieve the temporal necessities of the apostle, or which could help to lighten his chain, or alleviate his sufferings, would be withheld by this affectionate and munificent friend. But if anything of this kind was given, it was not thought worthy of being mentioned at the same time with his personal visit. Upon this Paul set a higher value than upon "all the substance of his house." To see the face of his ancient benefactor before he died, to receive his cordial and Christian embrace, to hear again his well-known and never-forgotten accents, to learn from his own lips, what he had heard from the report of others, that he retained all his former love to Christ, to his Gospel, to his servant, this—"this was the refreshing." This made all the garments of his visitant to smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia; and converted his narrow and gloomy cell into an ivory palace, in which he could entertain and make glad his guest.

Though an apostle, though endued with such deep insight into the mysteries of the Gospel, that the very chiefest of the apostles "added nothing to him in conference," and though now grown old in Christian experience, Paul did not think himself above receiving consolation and spiritual benefit from the meanest saint. In "giving and receiving" this, he was always ready to communicate with his brethren. Hence he assigned this reason for wishing to visit the Christians at Rome,—*"that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me."*¹ We cannot doubt that he was "refreshed" on the present occasion by the conversation which he held with Onesiphorus.

¹ Rom. i. 18.

And what might the nature of that conversation be? Not, perhaps, exactly that which we might at first suppose it to have been. When Moses and Elias appeared with our Saviour on the Holy Mount, though he was transfigured before them, they did not entertain him with the glories of the celestial city from which they had just made their descent; but "they spake of the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." Paul and Onesiphorus would not spend the precious moments in talking of the passing news of the day, nor even in recalling the incidents of their former life when they knew one another in happier external circumstances. Their communings would be on higher themes; nor would their countenances be sad while they discoursed of him who died for them, and rose again, and was now at the right hand of God,—and of his love, from which no distance of place, or depth of distress, or form of death, could separate them,—and of the triumphs which the cross had gained over the powers of darkness, and the still more signal triumphs which awaited it in its irresistible progress,—and of the death by which Paul was shortly to glorify God, and to seal his preaching, now "fully made known to the Gentiles,"—and of the comforts which would make him more than a conqueror in the closing conflict,—and of the joy of his Lord into which he would immediately enter. On these high and heart-ravishing themes would they dilate, while the hours fled unheeded away, until the faint glimmerings of the lamp, reflected from the walls of the cell, discovered to them the haggard faces of its fierce inmates subdued into a temporary tameness, while they listened with fixed attention to the strange things which now for the first time saluted their ears; and while their every feature expressed the surprise and astonishment which they felt at witnessing the joy and transports of a detested criminal, who had the prospect of speedily terminating his life in the midst of the most excruciating torments.

But though the conversation of Onesiphorus must have imparted high pleasure to Paul, it was not the chief source of the gratulation which he expressed at his visit. What conveyed the most lively joy to his heart, was the testimony which his Ephesian friend had given of his love to the Gospel, by "despising the shame" with which its imprisoned apostle was then loaded. "He refreshed me," for "he was not ashamed of my chain." You may feel some difficulty in entering fully into the force of this reason. If the apostle had said, "He was not afraid of incurring my bonds," you could have understood him more easily. This was included; but there is great propriety in expressing the whole of the sufferings to which Christians were then exposed by this part of them; for in reality shame was the gall of its bitterness. Hence the language in which Paul addresses his exhortation to Timothy in the context: "Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the Gospel:" and hence, too, his declaration concerning himself, "I suffer these things,

nevertheless I am not ashamed." You will err exceedingly, my brethren, if you suppose there was any resemblance between Onesiphorus's visit to Paul, and those which charitable and pious individuals are now accustomed to pay to prisons, with the laudable view of alleviating the bodily sufferings, or ministering to the spiritual wants of their wretched inhabitants; visits which, so far from exposing them to disgrace, greatly enhance their reputation. Nor are you to imagine that the shame was incurred by a man of respectable rank visiting and conversing with a prisoner in chains, or that it arose in any degree from the worthless character of the malefactors with whom the apostle was confined. So far was this from being the case, that it was then much less disgraceful to suffer as a thief or a murderer than as a Christian. It would lead us away from our subject to inquire into the causes which co-operated in producing this feeling. Suffice it at present to say, that it appears from the concurring testimony of civil and ecclesiastical history, that from a variety of causes (not involving the conduct of its professors), Christianity had at this time fallen under extreme odium at Rome, the most diabolical calumnies against its friends were industriously circulated and greedily believed; and they were regarded by the multitude, magistrates, and philosophers, with a mixture of hatred, horror, and contempt not to be described. During his first imprisonment, Paul was kept under an easy restraint, lived in his own hired house under the guard of a soldier, received his friends, and preached the Gospel, without any hinderance. But it was quite otherwise now during his second imprisonment. He was thrown into chains, capitally arraigned, and although he had miraculously escaped at his first appearance before Nero, yet he looked every day for the pronouncing of his doom. Accordingly all his brethren, even those who had hitherto stuck most closely by him, had withdrawn and left him to his fate. No man knew him. It was only after a long search, and many fruitless inquiries, that Onesiphorus could discover the dungeon in which he was confined, and trace him to his cell, where he was shut up with the most depraved of the criminals who swarmed in the metropolis of the world—"men-stealers, murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers," who yet shunned his society, and looked on themselves as they were looked on by others, as felons less foul than—that Christian.

Come hither, my brethren, draw near, and look on infant Christianity, "the mother of us all." Do ye recognise her? Her cradle a cell, her clothing rags, her swathing-band an iron chain, her nurse a jailer, her mates and betters the vilest of the malefactors! Here let us humble ourselves, and try whether we be Christians indeed. Ah! how little know we of suffering shame for the name of the Lord Jesus! Which of us would be able to bear the proof, if, to testify our attachment to him, it were necessary for us to submit to be made a gazing-stock by reproaches and afflictions, or to become companions of them that were so used? It was this proof of love to the Gospel, and of

unextinguishable affection for himself on the part of Onesiphorus, that penetrated the heart of Paul, and filled it with exultation. "He was not ashamed of my chain." Ashamed of it? No: he gloried in it, embraced it, called it the chain of his blessed Saviour, and protested that for his sake he would willingly bind it about his neck, and wear it as a badge of distinction more honourable than the diadem of Cæsar.

II. Of Paul's return for the kindness of Onesiphorus.

Alas! what return could he make for such rare and disinterested goodness? Although it had been possible to discharge the debt, he was at present utterly destitute of the means. His feet were fast bound in the stocks; and he could not even testify his gratitude in that way in which the meanest pauper feels a pleasure in doing it, while he accompanies his benefactor to the door of the hovel which he had cheered by his presence. All his friends had deserted him; and there was not an individual within the walls of the crowded city to whom he could delegate the performance of the rites of hospitality due to the friendly stranger. Did there, then, remain to Paul no way of expressing his gratitude? Yes, there was one, and that more excellent and efficient than all those to which we have alluded. He could not follow Onesiphorus to the door of his cell; but he could follow him whithersoever he went with his prayers. He could give him no assistance in the secular business which had brought him to Rome; but he could further his views in the more lucrative traffic which he carried on with heaven. He could not say to him, as the prophet to his Shunammite hostess, "Wouldst thou be spoken for to the king or the captain of the host?"¹ But he had interest at a higher court than that of any king or emperor, and could speak for him to the Captain of Salvation. True he was in bonds; but he was "an ambassador in bonds;" and those who had dared to throw into prison the ambassador of the King of kings, and to interrupt him in the discharge of his embassy, could not prevent him from maintaining an intercourse with the court of heaven by prayer, or from recommending to it any individual who, by showing kindness to him, had befriended its interests. Paul had it not in his power to testify his gratitude to Onesiphorus, as David did to Barzillai, by receiving his son into his family;² but he recommended his whole household to the tutelage and mercy of the bountiful Master whom he served.

"The Lord give mercy to the house of Onesiphorus!" It appears from the close of the epistle, in which the apostle sends his salutations "to the household of Onesiphorus," that the head of the family had not yet returned to Ephesus, being most probably still detained in Italy on the business which had brought him from home. Like every good man he would feel anxious about the safety of his family in his absence, and would be much engaged in supplications to God in their

¹ 2 Kings, iv. 13.

² 2 Sam. xix. 31—38.

behalf. Now what things he sought for them, these Paul also sought for them in this brief but comprehensive petition: "The Lord be a father and head to them during the absence of their earthly protector and guide! Because he hath made the Lord, who is my refuge, even the Most High, his habitation, let no plague come nigh his dwelling! Shield them from sickness and violence, and every evil! Above all, preserve them in the paths of righteousness, in which they have been trained to walk! My God, supply all their need out of thy riches in glory by Jesus Christ!" Wonder not that I consider this as applying to the effects of mercy in time, for in this sense the apostle uses the expression elsewhere, with reference to an individual to whom he was greatly indebted: Epaphroditus "was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him (recovered him); and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow."¹ How much would it have added to the weight of Paul's chain, if anything distressing had happened to the family of his friend during this journey! Doubtless, however, this petition was not confined to temporal blessings, but included what we find him next supplicating for Onesiphorus himself.

"The Lord grant unto him that he may find mercy of the Lord in that day!" And what could Paul say more? What could the most liberal soul devise more liberally than this? Enlarged as his desires were, big, swelling, and overflowing with gratitude as his heart at this time was, could he ask anything greater for his Christian friend and benefactor than that at the great day of accounts, when he should stand before the bar of the universal Judge, and await the sentence fixing his eternal condition, he should "find mercy of the Lord,"—be mercifully acquitted, and accepted, and rewarded? He had shown mercy to the apostle in the day of his trial, and he prays that mercy may be shown to him in the day of his trial. He had "refreshed him oft," and he prays that the great day of decision may be to his benefactor a "time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." The apostle had just been expressing to Timothy his persuasion that he to whom he had "committed" his own soul was "able to keep it against that day;" and what higher testimony of his regard could he give to Onesiphorus than to commit him to the same all-sufficient and faithful Redeemer? He had parted with him expecting to see his face no more until the day that they should appear at the same judgment-seat; and, therefore, he "commends" him, as he had done the elders of the church to which he belonged, "to God, and to the word of his grace, which was able to build him up, and to give him an inheritance among all them which are sanctified."² This is Christian gratitude.

The repetition of the name of the person to whom he addresses himself, and from whom he implores mercy to Onesiphorus, is expressive of the fulness of the apostle's heart, and the ardour of his affection. But my object was not to bring forth all that is implied in the expressions,

¹ Philip. ii. 27.

² Acts, xx. 32.

but to unfold the characters delineated in the passage. Let us now improve the subject.

The improvement is twofold. We have here exemplified the power of Christianity on two individuals placed in very different situations—the one a private member of the church, the other an apostle; the one in affluent circumstances, the other in the most destitute condition; the one at liberty, the other in chains, and about to be led out to an ignominious death. The grace of God shines in both with a beautiful variety. Their features differ, and yet they are evidently children of the same family. In the charity and constancy of the one, in the piety and gratitude of the other, and in the faith and fortitude of both, you may see what the Gospel is capable of effecting, and thus have your confidence in its truth confirmed. But the subject is to be improved also in the way of imitation, by Christians in circumstances differing very widely. I shall point out a few of its lessons.

1. Learn to look more on the bright than on the dark side of the picture of your lot. The mind easily catches the impression of the objects on which it habitually dwells; if they be dark, it will be gloomy; if they be light, it will be cheerful. Who so deeply and so uniformly involved in afflictions as Paul, and yet who so uniformly and so joyfully elevated as he? One secret of this we perceive in the passage before us. He was in bonds; but Onesiphorus was not ashamed of his bonds. He had been deserted by his friends; but there was one who had diligently sought him out and found him. And he dwelt on the last until the remembrance of the first was completely obliterated from his mind. Go thou, Christian; do likewise; and then, “though sorrowful, thou wilt be always rejoicing.”

2. Learn that Christianity does not extinguish any of the innocent feelings of human nature, and improves those which are amiable. It is natural for us to be dejected when we are forsaken and left alone; and to be cheered and refreshed by the visits, the conversation, and the sympathy of friends. Such is our weakness here—the weakness of the strongest—that we are easily dejected and easily elevated. God can support the heart by his gracious assistance and the consolations of his Spirit; but such is the respect which he has for our frame, that he often condescendingly and seasonably provides for us external cordials. Paul tells us on another occasion that, when he was in great distress, “God, who comforteth them that are cast down, comforted him by the coming of Titus.” Beware, my brethren, of sullenly rejecting anything of this kind when it is offered to you, or refusing to rejoice in it because it falls short of the proper consolations of the Gospel. It is from God; the refreshing of your animal spirits may be introductory to spiritual joy; and by means of both you may be helped to glorify him. Our blessed Redeemer himself, when he went to the garden of agony, took three of his disciples along with him, to watch with him while he prayed; and when they fell asleep, there appeared unto him an angel,

strengthening him. And as Christianity does not war with the innocent, so it improves the amiable feelings. Instead of weakening, it strengthens parental affection, excites it when it is dormant, checks its excess, raises it from an instinct or a passion into a virtue, and expands it into a warm and active concern for the spiritual and eternal welfare of its endearing objects. This is true, also, of friendship and of gratitude. They are not swallowed up in a feeling of universal benevolence, but purified and exalted by an infusion of Christian principle. Onesiphorus had doubtless performed acts of beneficence to many others besides Paul. Why are the latter only mentioned? To afford you an example of Christian gratitude.

3. Learn that beneficence is a native fruit of Christianity, and a leading test, especially in the affluent, of Christian character. What is the Gospel but the discovery of the love and kindness of God to man? Will not then the unfeigned belief of it produce philanthropy, or a disposition, "as we have opportunity, to do good to all men, especially the household of faith?" Who can resist the force of this divine logic: "If God so loved us, we ought to love one another," and that not in word and in tongue, but in deed, "as he loved us, and gave his only begotten Son?" Do *they* "know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," or have they "tasted that he is gracious," who are not disposed to be gracious and merciful to their brethren? Can *they* be said to believe that Christ "gave himself for them" and "delivered them from the wrath to come," and that they are "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him," who will give nothing, or what is to them next to nothing, to relieve their fellow-creatures and fellow-Christians from temporal distresses and want? Can *they* believe that the Son of God came from heaven to earth on an errand of mercy, and gave himself a ransom for men of all nations, who cannot extend their regards beyond those who are of their own neighbourhood and country? Can *they* believe that he gave himself for sinners, whose love and its exertions are confined entirely to the righteous and the good? True Christianity supplants an inordinate affection to the things of the world by means of the love of God, banishes that selfishness which disposes persons to retain whatever they possess, and, by enlarging their hearts, makes them to give without grudging, and to feel the words of the Lord Jesus, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Such was the influence of Christianity on the primitive believers, when "great grace was upon them all—neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own." Such was its influence on the Macedonians, who contributed for the relief of their brethren in Judea "to their power, yea, and beyond their power." Such was its influence on the Hebrews, whose "labour of love in ministering to the saints" is commended by the apostle. And such will be its influence in every age upon all who are savingly acquainted with it. Without this, no attainments in religious knowledge, no orthodoxy in point of sentiment, no zeal of God,

no correctness of moral conduct, no warmth of religious affections, no disconformity to the world in its sinful fashions or vain amusements, no mortifications or abstinence from the pleasures of life, will be a sure mark or safe criterion of Christian character.

4. Learn from this subject what is the best expression of gratitude. It is proper to testify our sense of favours received by acknowledgments to our benefactors ; but the apostle, in the passage under consideration, "shows us a more excellent way," while he pours out fervent supplications to God in behalf of Onesiphorus and his family. He that does the former does well ; he that neglects not the latter does better. There is less danger of its being ceremonious or merely complimentary ; and surely it promises to be more effectual and available. Those whom Providence has placed in such circumstances as to require the assistance of others, should beware of failing in this duty, or of performing it in a listless and cold manner. If you are subjected to hardships from which your richer brethren are exempted, they are exposed to temptations from which you are exempted. Pray for them that their table, instead of becoming a "snare to them," may be sanctified, and that they may not have all their good things in their life-time. If you are deficient in making a return for gifts which you have received, you have yourselves to blame. A Christian can never be a bankrupt, for he can always draw on heaven. If you cannot pay your debts of gratitude yourselves, you can by means of prayer transfer them to one who is able to discharge them. Access to "the throne of grace" is a precious privilege to all saints, but it is doubly so to the poor ; for it enables them to relieve themselves from a load which cannot fail to be oppressive to every feeling mind.

5. Those who are in ability are encouraged by this subject to be kind and compassionate to necessitous and afflicted Christians. By such conduct you draw out their desires to God in your behalf ; and the prayers of the righteous in such cases have the force of promises, as their complaints against the cruel and oppressive have the force of curses. Christians pray for all men, including their enemies ; but they do not, and cannot pray for all with the same warmth and confidence. When mentioning his desertion by his brethren at his appearance before Nero, Paul says, "I pray God that it may not be laid to their charge !" But there is a marked difference between that prayer and this in our text. "The prayer of a righteous man availeth much" when it is "fervent." Your acts of kindness will excite their religious affections, cause them to remember you every time they bow their knees to their heavenly Father, and fill their mouths with new arguments for enforcing their petitions. Falling into their souls, your beneficence will refresh them, open them to the rays of the sun of righteousness, and thus make them send up their fragrance to heaven, like the earth when it has been refreshed by a shower. Their prayers will be to your alms what the oil

and frankincense were to the meat-offering under the law ; and both will ascend as "a sweet savour unto the Lord."¹

In fine, you may learn from this subject that deeds of beneficence and charity are not meritorious in the sight of God. Those who teach the merit of good works learned it not assuredly either from the doctrine or the prayers of Paul ; for when his heart was penetrated most deeply with a sense of the kindness of Onesiphorus, and when he prayed most fervently that he might be rewarded for it, he employed in each petition the plea of *mercy*. Your "goodness reacheth not unto God, but to the saints ;" and shall a few temporal favours which you have been enabled to do for "the excellent of the earth" assume that mighty importance in your eyes as to merit the kingdom of heaven ? Guard against legalism as well as antinomianism ; and, O ! beware lest your vessel, fully furnished with every good work, strike on that rock which has proved fatal to the hopes of so many. "Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercy, kindness," but put on also "humbleness of mind." When you have done all, say, "We are unprofitable servants, we have done no more than we ought to have done." "God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love." Verily you shall have a reward ; but then it will be a reward of grace and not of debt. Those who deserve best of their fellow-creatures are most deeply impressed with a sense of their ill-desert in respect of God ; and those who are the most faithful "servants of righteousness," instead of claiming "eternal life" as "wages" due to them, will be most disposed to receive it as "the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord." Cherish this disposition, and it will cause you to be not slothful but zealous and diligent followers of them who, through faith and patience, inherit the promises, and thus you shall make your calling and election sure to yourselves. "Ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

¹ Lev. ii. ; Philip. iv. 18.

SERMON V.

THE PRAYER OF THE THIEF ON THE CROSS.

“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”—LUKE, xxiii. 42.

WHEN a friend whom we tenderly loved, and to whom we are deeply indebted, has died at a distance from us, we are anxious to have the fullest information respecting the manner and circumstances of his death; and we peruse, with a lively interest, the letters of those who relate what they saw and heard on the melancholy occasion. We wish to know the immediate cause of his death, the degree of pain which he suffered, the treatment he received from his attendants, the conversation which he held with them, his dying sayings, his last words, the day and even the hour of his expiry, and the manner in which the final duty was paid to his earthly remains. All this information respecting the best friend of men has been transmitted to us in the narratives which the four Evangelists wrote of the death of Jesus Christ. His death, indeed, differs widely from that of all other men; it stands by itself, and is altogether peculiar in its causes, and the designs which Providence intended to effect by means of it. “It is appointed to all men once to die,” and every one dies for himself and not for others; but Christ was once offered “to bear the sins of many;” and was “cut off, but not for himself.” This is the proper light in which that event ought to be viewed; and of such magnitude and interest is it, that it might seem, at first sight, to exclude and banish the thought of everything else as trivial and unimportant. “Christ died for our sins,” you may be apt to say, “and that is enough for us to know.” But, my brethren, it is otherwise. The circumstances of his death were fixed by the divine decree, as well as the event itself; they were revealed beforehand to the prophets; and we are furnished with minute details of them in the historical books of the New Testament. They must, therefore, have a claim on our devout attention. Nor is this all. It will be found on examination, that they all contribute, in one way or another, to throw light on the grand design of his dying, and to disclose or brighten the displays of the wisdom of God in that unparalleled event. There was not a circumstance of ignominy or pain in his sufferings which did not form an in-

gredient in that cup of wrath which he drank for us ; not a circumstance of alleviation about them which did not enter into the cordial which was needful to support him in the arduous work of achieving our redemption ; and it is only in the way of our surveying the whole that we can attain to a complete and comprehensive acquaintance with the enormity of our own guilt, and with the breadth and length and height and depth of that knowledge-passing love which prompted him to undertake our cause. Nor is there one of these circumstances which, when rightly viewed, will not help to increase our faith, and to strengthen those feelings with which we ought always to contemplate and remember the Lord's death.

The most important and prominent of these circumstances (if circumstance it can be called), is the kind of death which he suffered—that of the cross. By this we are instructed in the nature and design of his sufferings, agreeably to what was announced beforehand in a divine statute, referred to by the apostle : “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us : for it is written, Cursed is he that hangeth on a tree.”¹ This holds true, also, of the circumstances of his crucifixion, whether antecedent, concomitant, or consequent. Convinced of the innocence of the person brought before his tribunal, and yet desirous to gratify the Jews, the Roman governor thought to relieve himself from the embarrassment in which he was involved by releasing Jesus, according to a custom which had been long observed at the annual feast of the Passover. But the chief priests instigated the populace, with loud voices, to demand the crucifixion of Jesus, and the release of Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a notorious felon, who had been guilty of sedition, a crime which rulers are usually inclined to visit with exemplary punishment, and of murder, which banishes sympathy for the criminal from the breasts of all classes of men. The circumstance of such a malefactor being preferred to Jesus, while it showed the malice of the priests and the infatuation of the people, was, at the same time, a proof of the deep degradation of “him whom the man despised, and the nation abhorred.” Accordingly, it is mentioned by the Apostle Peter, in one of the sermons which he preached to his countrymen after the resurrection : “Ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you.”²

But this was not all the indignity done to him. It was determined that he should be crucified along with two malefactors,—thieves, highwaymen or robbers, as the original word properly signifies. Now, this circumstance, as well as the crucifixion itself, happened according to the prescient and wise appointment of Heaven, and served as an external indication of the character in which he suffered as the surety of sinners. Accordingly, the Evangelist Mark states it as a fulfilment of that Scripture which saith, “He was numbered with the transgressors, and did bear the sins of many.”³ We might have thought it likely that the lives of some of his disciples would be sacrificed along with Jesus, and

¹ Gal. iii. 13.

² Acts, iii. 14.

³ Mark, xv. 28 ; comp. Isa. liii. 12.

that they would have been the companions of his cross ; but this was prevented for wise reasons by him who "maketh the wrath of man to praise him." For the holy hand of God did not extenuate the guilt of his murderers, who acted freely under the influence of their own malice and cruelty, and whose object it was, by this arrangement, to cover him with ignominy. They crucified him with the malefactors, the one on the right hand, and the other on the left, and Jesus in the midst, to intimate that he was the greatest criminal of the three. By this means they excited against him the odium of the populace, who, always ready to judge from appearances, would conclude that he was of the same abandoned character as his fellow-sufferers : a piece of hellish policy in which the Jews have been imitated by the court of Inquisition, who brought out those whom they stigmatised as heretics, and committed them to the flames, along with persons guilty of unnatural and detestable crimes. By this means, too, the murderers of Jesus sought to aggravate his sufferings by exposing him to be disturbed in his last moments by the groans, and shrieks, and blasphemies of such godless and impious wretches.

And in this they were not disappointed. For we are told, in verse thirty-ninth, that "one of the malefactors which were hanged, railed on him, saying, If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us." Consider, my brethren, the situation in which Jesus was now placed. The chief priests and rulers of the Jews, mixing with the mob who surrounded his cross, encouraged them to load him with taunts and bitter mockery, crying, "He saved others ; himself he cannot save. If thou be the Christ, the king of Israel, come down from the cross, and we will believe on thee." The soldiers who had crucified him, having parted his garments, and cast lots for his vesture, had joined in reviling him. And now at last, his fellow-sufferer, who hung by his side, bursts forth in that horrid expression, which has in it more of the irony of the fiend than the agony of the sufferer : "If thou be the Christ, save thyself and us." Now Jesus must have felt himself to be sunk low indeed, when he was become the scorn of the most abject of the abjects. Now he might be said to have descended into hell, and to endure the pains of hell, the inhabitants of which are exposed to the reproaches of their companions in torment. Ah ! how difficult was it to believe, at this moment, that he was the Holy One of God ! Surely there was need of an attestation to his personal innocence. And was there none given ? Yes :—For a voice was suddenly heard silencing the storm of ungodly scorn and blasphemy, and vindicating the oppressed and meek sufferer. And whence was it ? Was it the voice of an angel, sent from heaven to rebuke the madness of mankind and comfort the dying Saviour ? Did it proceed from one among the crowd who had formerly felt the healing virtue of his word, and whose gratitude would not suffer him to be longer silent ? Was it the voice of the disciple whom Jesus loved, who ordinarily lay on his breast, and who had come to witness the crucifixion ? Or, was it that of Peter, who, having recovered from the panic

into which he had been thrown, and escaped from the toils of Satan, was pressing through the multitude, determined to confess his Master more openly than he had of late denied him? No; the gates of heaven were shut, and the angels were commanded to stand at a distance. The friends of Jesus were scattered; and such of them as were present, had their lips sealed with grief and fear. Did the voice then proceed from the rocks? and was the prediction of Jesus, "If these hold their peace, the stones shall cry out," now fulfilled? Yes; it was fulfilled in a manner more striking than if that had happened which was literally expressed by his words. The voice proceeded from the lips of an ignorant and lawless robber—the fellow of the hardened malefactor, whose blasphemous tongue had just been heard from the cross above the clamour of the infuriate rabble which raged below. And what did this new confessor say? He rebuked his partner in language which intimated that they were partners in crime no longer, in solemn accents, but with a meekness which showed that his soul had already held secret converse with him who hung silent by his side. He confessed his past crimes, and the justice of the sentence under which he suffered, and without the least murmuring, or palliation, or discrimination between himself and his obdurate companion in guilt. Having exhibited these tokens of credibility, he justified the person who had been condemned to suffer along with them, and bore an unhesitating testimony to his spotless innocence. And then turning his eyes to Jesus, he said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Who can tell what these words conveyed? None but he to whom they were addressed, who saw into the bottom of the speaker's heart, approved of his confession, and answered his petition exceedingly above what the petitioner could ask or think, when he replied, "Verily, I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." It was not a time, my brethren, for many words. But O how much is expressed by these two short sentences, spoken from such hearts, and in such circumstances! What a colloquy was this! What a communion! What a respite from torture! What a foretaste of paradise! What a feast on a cross between earth and heaven! There was no opportunity for salutations or embracing, or the exchanging of the symbolical cup. But what an exchange of tender looks! What a conjunction of hearts! What an intimate friendship on so short an acquaintance! What a joyful farewell before so awful a parting! Think you, my brethren, that either of the twain felt at this moment the nails with which they were transfixed to the tree? The soul of the penitent thief was filled with a joy unutterable which must have swallowed up all sense of pain. He rejoiced in the death by which he now glorified God. He gloried on the cross, and "in the cross." True, he was crucified, but then he was "crucified with Christ," and that in another sense than his unhappy companion was, or than any of the spectators of the scene knew or apprehended. This was to him matter of ineffable gloriation. "Blessed day on which I was over-

taken and seized by the pursuivants of justice! Blessed sentence, which brought me into the company and acquaintance of the Saviour of sinners, of the chief of sinners, and advanced me to the high, the distinguished honour of suffering along with him!" At that moment, too, Jesus rejoiced in spirit. He saw of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied. He felt that he was a conqueror. He had already begun to divide the spoil ravished from principalities and powers, which he made a show of openly, triumphing over them on his cross. In the conquest which he had just achieved, he beheld an earnest of his subsequent triumphs over the god of this world, and, exhilarated with the prospect, he "endured the cross, despising the shame." The address of the believing, penitent malefactor, was, at the same time, a prayer, a confession of faith, and a sermon. But no such prayer had been offered up since "men began to call on the name of the Lord:" no such confession of faith was ever made by council or assembly of divines: no such sermon was ever delivered by the most powerful and eloquent preacher. And then the Saviour's reply! Many a compassionate, benignant, and seasonable answer had he vouchsafed to those who invoked him, and who professed their faith in him. But none of them equalled this. Pleased with the confession of Nathanael, he said to him: "Thou shalt see the heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man." To Peter he had said: "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven." To the Syrophenician: "O woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt." To the Roman Centurion: "I have not found such faith; no, not in Israel." And to his disciples: "Henceforth I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in the kingdom of God." But to none of these did he say as unto this poor, converted, crucified thief: "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise." He had made many converts during his personal ministry, when he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. But of this man he had made a convert on the cross, in the midst of great agony of body and soul; and, therefore, he rejoiced in him above all his fellows. He was his Benoni, the son of his sorrow; and, therefore, he made him his Benjamin, the son of his right hand.

But let us examine more coolly and attentively this singular address of the convert on the cross. Let us consider, in the *first* place, who he was, and the circumstances in which he was placed; *secondly*, the situation in which Jesus was when he addressed him; *thirdly*, the profession of faith which it contains; and, *fourthly*, the prayer which it expressed.

I. Consider the person who made the address, and the circumstances in which he was placed. He was a thief and a robber—one who, by his own confession, merited the ignominious death which he was suffering. Abandoning the path of honest industry, he had betaken himself to the

highway, and procured his livelihood by preying on the property and life of the peaceable. When we consider the character of Barabbas, whom they preferred to Jesus, and the design for which his fellow-sufferers were selected, we may be sure that they were criminals of the worst sort, whose practices had excited general hatred and terror. We all know what the characters of those who have devoted themselves to this mode of living are—how reckless of life—how destitute of principle—how enslaved to every base and malignant passion—how dead to all the feelings of honour, reputation, compassion, or compunction—how insensible to the remonstrances of conscience, or the lessons of experience—how regardless of God or man—how disposed to mock at everything that is sacred, at death, judgment, and eternity! You cannot point to a class of men from whom you could select an individual less likely to be affected with the scene of the crucifixion, or to sympathise with the meek, and patient, and forgiving Jesus. The conduct of the thief who reviled him, and the words which he is represented as having used, are just what we would have expected from such a person in such circumstances.

Matthew and Mark, in their account of the crucifixion, say, “the thieves also who were crucified with him reviled him,” and “cast the same in his teeth;” from which we might conclude that both acted in the same manner when first affixed to the cross, but that one of them underwent a sudden change in his sentiments, which produced a complete alteration on his language, and led him to justify and pray to the Saviour whom he had a little before reviled and outraged. This is no impossible thing. Transformations as wonderful and as sudden have been effected. Saul of Tarsus was arrested in the middle of his mad career, and he who was “breathing out threatenings” against all who called on the name of Jesus of Nazareth, was found the next moment invoking that name of which he had been “a blasphemer,” and with the most humble and implicit submission, praying, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” The jailer of Philippi is another example. Having found the prison-doors open, and supposing that Paul and Silas had escaped, he was in the very act of sheathing his drawn sword in his own bowels, when on a sudden, on the speaking of a few words, the weapon of destruction dropped from his hands, and the bold and determined suicide hung trembling on the knees of his prisoners, and under a deep concern about the safety, not of his body but his soul, cried out, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” The same power which was so visibly exerted in these instances could easily have purified the fountain of ungodliness in this man’s heart at the very moment that the words of bitter derision were flowing from his tongue, and made them to be followed by the sweet and salutary strains of blessing and prayer streaming from a smitten, softened, opened, and sanctified soul. But as the evangelist Luke gives the most circumstantial narrative of the extraordinary incident, it is more natural to consider his detail as quali-

fyng and explaining the general statement of his brethren ; and he represents only one of the malefactors as reviling Jesus, and the other as vindicating him. Nor is it uncommon in Scripture to affirm that of a number of persons or things of the same kind, which is true of one of them only. Thus we are told that the ark “rested on the mountains of Ararat,” that is, on one of them ; that Lot “dwelt in the cities of the plain,” that is, in one of them ; that “the soldiers ran and filled a sponge with vinegar,” that is, one of them did so. In like manner we are told “the thieves railed on him,” that is, one of them did it.

Although, however, the person mentioned in our text did not join in the blasphemies of his comrade, we have every reason for thinking that the cross was the place of his conversion ; and that he came to it with no more knowledge of Jesus, and no more love to him, than his fellow had. But while he was suspended on the cross his heart was changed—he was convinced of sin, enlightened in the knowledge of the Saviour, who was crucified along with him, humbled, sanctified, and made a new man. That the influence by which this was brought about was divine, there cannot be a moment’s doubt. The only question is—as the Spirit of God does not ordinarily produce this change on the minds of adults without the intervention and use of external means—by what instrumentality was this man converted, and how did he attain that knowledge of the truth concerning Christ which he displayed in his address to him ?

When Jesus began to teach in the synagogue of his native place, his townsmen were astonished, and exclaimed, “Whence hath this man this wisdom ? Is not this the carpenter’s son ? Whence then hath he all these things ?” There is reason for putting the same question as to this thief, and under a similar feeling of astonishment. Like others who have followed his unlawful trade, we have every reason to think that he was brought up in ignorance and profaneness, and that he was as destitute of religious knowledge as he was of moral honesty. He was too much occupied with his trade to attend on the sermons, or witness the miracles of Jesus ; and his exclusion from all sober and decent society must have prevented him from hearing of them by the report of others. By what means, then, did he acquire the knowledge of him ? In his prison he might hear of his arraignment and sentence ; and after he knew that he was to be crucified along with him, curiosity would induce him to inquire into the cause of his condemnation. This might perhaps satisfy him that Jesus was no evil-doer—that he had been guilty of no murder, or theft, or sedition, and that the envy of the chief priests had delivered him up to Pilate ; and it is probable that his companion also knew all this, and had the same conviction in his breast, although he railed on him as an impostor. But it was at Golgotha, and when hanging on the accursed tree, that he acquired that knowledge which issued in his conversion. And what were the means of his instruction ? None that I can discover or tell you of, my

brethren, but what he was able to glean from the speeches of those who were below, from the few words which Jesus had spoken, and from the inscription on his cross. The first he had heard say, "He saved others;" and who can tell what light this saying might let into an understanding opened by the Spirit of God? He had also heard them speak of him, although with incredulity, as "the Christ, the King of Israel, the Son of God, who trusted in God that he would deliver him." He had heard the remarkable and heart-melting prayer which Jesus offered up for his murderers, when they were in the act of nailing him to the tree, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do;" and he had a practical commentary on them in the meekness and patience with which he "endured the cross, despising the shame." And he had an opportunity of reading the inscription which was written over his head in legible characters, in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, "This is Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." This, my brethren, was at once the text and the sermon by which the thief was converted; and, accordingly, the language of his address and prayer is borrowed from it. He believed that he was "Jesus," a Saviour. He believed that he was a "King;" and he believed that his cross was the way to his crown, for it witnessed of it, and it pointed to it. And believing this, and encouraged by it to put his trust in him, he said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Think it not strange, or at least think it not incredible, that the words of scorn and derision spoken by an infatuated, infuriated mob should be made the means of so much good to this man's soul. They were truth, saving truth, and contained the substance of the Gospel, and of what Jesus had taught concerning himself. Think it not incredible, that the inscription devised by an unbelieving and unjust judge should have been the means of delivering a criminal, whom he had condemned to an excruciating death, from a doom still more awful. It contained the very truth which the person to whom it referred had testified when he stood at the bar of Pilate, and it was devised and written at the secret instigation of Him whose "determinate counsel" the Roman governor executed in this as well as in other parts of this divinely-ordained transaction. Many an excellent, savoury, and saving sermon has been preached from the insidious saying of the arch-priest Caiaphas: "It is expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not." And why, in that year, and on that day, which was big with the eternal destinies of a world, to which all the prophets and holy men from the beginning had looked forward, and all holy men to the end shall look back,—why, at such a time, should not a pagan magistrate have been made to prophesy as well as a Jewish priest? And why should not his prophecy have been the means of enlightening the mind of a robber, and qualifying him for confessing the dying Redeemer of sinners, both Jewish and Gentile?

But, my brethren, we are to remember that it is one thing for us to

perceive the meaning of this inscription, possessing, as we do, the whole New Testament, yea, the whole Bible, as a commentary on it, and having leisure to compare the commentary with the text; and that it was quite another thing for the thief, without any such helps, to decipher its language and extricate its sense; and that, too, while he hung on the cross in a state of exquisite bodily pain. That he should have been able to do this, and by what process of thought he came to the conclusion which he drew, will continue always to be matter of wonder—a monument of the inscrutable wisdom and amazing grace of Him who works by whatever means it pleaseth him to employ.

II. Consider the situation in which Jesus was placed when this man addressed him in the words of the text.

During his personal ministry, the rays of his glory often pierced the veil of his outward humiliation, so that those that saw its manifestations had all their doubts dissipated, and were assured that he came from God, and was the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. But this man became acquainted with him, and beheld him, not at Jordan, where heaven pronounced him its Son; or at Cana of Galilee, where he manifested forth his glory; or by the lake of Tiberias, where he fed the multitude; or in Bethany, where he raised Lazarus; or in Tabor, where he was transfigured; but he beheld him for the first time at Golgotha, where, instead of speaking as never man spake, he was dumb as a sheep before her shearers, and, instead of doing mighty works, was crucified through weakness. At this time his glory was not merely under a cloud: it was in an eclipse, and seemed to have set never to reappear. It was the hour and power of darkness. Formerly he had been followed by multitudes, who crowded to him and thronged him, and when he withdrew they followed him and sought him out with great eagerness—the whole world was gone out after him, and they talked of making him a king, so that the chief priests became alarmed, and his disciples, seeing matters in so prosperous-like a train, thought it high time to look out for themselves, and to secure the most honourable places in that kingdom which he was about to erect. But this flattering prospect had vanished. The multitude which followed him for a time had melted away gradually, until he was left alone with the twelve; and at last he was forsaken by them also. One of them betrayed him, another abjured him, and all the rest fled, and were scattered; and their unfaithful and cowardly desertion had affixed a stigma on his pretensions, which all the malice and misrepresentation of his open adversaries had not been able to inflict. When he was arraigned before the high priest, hopes of his safety still remained; for the Romans retained the power of life and death in their own hands, and Pilate was not only disposed to let him go, but laboured to accomplish his release. Even after he was condemned to die, the case did not appear desperate; for those who had witnessed his miracles, and seen

the band sent to apprehend him struck to the ground, merely by his saying to them, "I am he," might flatter themselves that his enemies would be unable to carry their sentence into execution. This last hope had proved fallacious. He had suffered himself to be led as a lamb to the slaughter. He was now affixed to the tree, and was fast bleeding to death. There he hung between two notorious malefactors, disowned by all his former friends, insulted over by his enemies, heaven shut against his prayer, hell gaping for him as its prey. It was in these circumstances, when the cause of Jesus was in the most desperate-like condition, that this man, openly and for the first time, professed his faith in him.

III. Consider the import of the profession contained in his address.

Had he merely professed his belief that Jesus was an innocent man—that he had done nothing amiss or worthy of death, it would have been a great deal. Had he avowed that he thought him no impostor, but a true prophet, this would have been more than could have been expected, considering the circumstances in which both were placed. How hesitatingly and suspiciously did the two disciples, on the road to Emmaus, express themselves on this subject: "We TRUSTED that it had been he that should have redeemed Israel." But this man went far beyond this point in his profession. He addressed him as "Lord." The chief priests and rulers of the Jews spoke of him in the most contemptuous style—"this fellow" and "that deceiver." When Peter was challenged as one of his disciples, he said that he knew not "the man." The highest epithet that the disciples could give him after they had received a report of his resurrection was, "Jesus of Nazareth, a prophet mighty in word and deed." The thief addresses him now by that title which the apostles gave him after he had shown himself to them by infallible proofs. They could say, "the Lord is risen;" but they could not, like this thief, call him Lord, when he hung on the cross. Nor was this a mere title of respect. The cross was no place for complimentary or ceremonious language. In such circumstances, he would not have owned him at all, if he had not been persuaded that he was the Lord of all, of life and death, of heaven and hell. And as he addressed him as Lord, so he avowed his conviction that he was going to take possession of a kingdom. Wonderful faith! A dying man, a worm and no man, reproach of men and despised of the people, the lowest of the people, he addresses as Lord, and worships him. One whom he had seen arrayed in derision with the mock ensigns of royalty and then stripped of them and led away to be crucified, whom he had heard taunted with his kingly claims, and in vain desired to come down from the cross to give a proof of their validity, he nevertheless saluted, in deep earnest, as a king; and while God had set up the right hand of his adversaries, made all his enemies to rejoice, shortened the days of his youth, covered him with shame, and profaned his crown by casting it to the ground, he, strong in faith, staggered not, but, against hope, believed in hope, and avowed his confident assurance that he was

about to ascend the throne of his kingdom. Verily, such faith as this had not been evinced from the days of the father of the faithful.

And then how superior do his conceptions of the nature of Christ's kingdom appear to have been ! The Jews of that time had very gross and carnal notions of the reign of Messiah. They imagined that he would appear as a temporal and earthly monarch, emancipate them from the thralldom of a foreign yoke, and make the nations tributary to them. The disciples of Jesus had imbibed some of these prejudices, to which they clung pertinaciously, in spite of all the instructions of their Master ; nor were they altogether weaned from this erroneous and fond conceit by his crucifixion, as appears from the question which they put to him after he was risen, " Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel ? " How superior were the views which the converted thief acquired on this subject in a short time, to those of the disciples after they had for years listened to the spiritual doctrine, and contemplated the heavenly character of their Master. The prospect of his death was repugnant to all their ideas, and destructive of all their expectations of his kingly glory ; and when they saw him led away to be crucified, their hopes died away within them. He owned him to be a king in the lowest step of his abasement, and believed that his cross was the pedestal by which he would mount to his throne in the highest heavens.

IV. Let us, in fine, consider this address as a prayer.

It was said of Saul of Tarsus, after his conversion, and as one mark of that change which he had undergone, " Behold he prayeth ! " He had never prayed aright before that period, though, as a strict Pharisee, he had no doubt often practised the external form. But this was probably the first time that ever the thief had engaged in the exercise—the first time in his life that he had offered to God the sacrifice of the lips. Prayer is not an employment reconcilable with the trade which he had followed. It is necessary for such persons to banish the fear, and consequently to exclude the thought, of God. If that sacred name had come into his mouth, it would be in the form of hellish oaths or blasphemies. But now, behold he prayeth ! and that in deep earnest. He prayed to Jesus, whom his fellow-criminal was blaspheming, invoked him as Lord, and begged of him the greatest favour which, as a dying man, he could ask. Criminals have often been seen praying on a scaffold, and they have earnestly begged for a pardon, or a respite, or some other boon from their judges ; but this is the only instance in which a criminal was found supplicating and praying to his fellow-sufferer. And what was the petition which he presented ? It was not for deliverance from death or for any temporal blessing. He did not even seriously prefer the request of his comrade, " Save thyself and us." He was perfectly resigned to his fate. He was willing to endure the punishment due to his crime by the laws of God and man, and to expiate, by his own death, the offence which he

had done to society, while he who hung beside him expiated the sin which he had committed against heaven. "Lord! I have no desire to live. It is good for me to be here. It is better for me to die with thee than to reign with Cæsar. All my desire is to be with thee where thou art going; and O remember thy unworthy fellow-sufferer when thou art come into thy kingdom!" What unfeigned and contrite humility does this petition breathe! He prays as became one who felt and had confessed himself to be a great sinner, and who could have no possible claims but what were founded on the mere and unbought benignity of him whom he addressed. When the two sons of Zebedee requested to be permitted to sit, the one at the right and the other at the left hand of their Master in his kingdom, he asked them, "Can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? or can ye be baptised with the baptism with which I am baptised?" Here was one who was drinking of his bitter cup, and baptised with his bloody baptism; but he had no such ambitious wish, and presumed to present no such arrogant request. His heart was not haughty; his eyes were not lofty; neither did he aspire to great things. A genuine convert, his heart was like that of a weaned child. All that he ventured to ask was, that Jesus would remember him when he came to his kingdom.

But though presented with the profoundest humility, and expressive of the greatest submission, still this was a great request. O how much, my brethren, is included in these two words, addressed by a convinced sinner to the Saviour, "Remember me!" The eternal salvation of a sinner hangs upon them. If he remembers him, all is well; if he forgets him, woe unto him, for it shall be ill with him. Had not Christ remembered and thought upon us in our low estate, and undertaken our cause, we would have been hopeless. Had he not remembered his people, and borne their names on his breastplate, when he approached God as the great high-priest to make reconciliation for iniquity, their guilt would have remained. Did he not remember them, when they are lying polluted in their blood, and say to them, "Live!" they would die in their sins. Did he not continue to remember them, and pray for them, and help them by his Spirit, he that desires to have them as his prey would gain his object, and they would never see the kingdom of heaven. Had the penitent thief dropped out of the memory of Christ he would have dropped into hell at death, along with his blaspheming companion; for "nor thieves nor revilers shall inherit the kingdom of God." How could he, an ignorant, lawless, God-despising, heaven-daring profligate, presume to lift up his eyes, or to apply at the gates of paradise, unless he had ground to believe that his gracious and merciful fellow-sufferer would remember him? But if he continued to think of him and own him, what might he not expect? In fine, this prayer was offered believingly as well as fervently. He believed that Jesus had the highest interest with the Father, who would not refuse anything which should be craved by him who had laid down his life at his command;

that he was about to be put in possession of all power in heaven and earth ; and that this included authority to bestow its honours and rewards on whomsoever he would. And he believed that such was the grace, condescension, and compassion of the dying Redeemer, that he would not reject the application of a poor, convicted, condemned criminal, but wash him from his sins in his blood, and sanctify him by the power of his Spirit, and present him faultless before the throne of his glory with exceeding joy. Nor did he believe in vain, nor was the answer of his prayer long delayed or dubiously expressed ; for Jesus instantly said to him, " Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise."

In reviewing this wonderful scene, a variety of reflections, all conducive to practical improvement, crowd upon the mind. Let us dwell a little on a few of them.

First, We have here an indisputable instance of real conversion. Examples of this change have occurred in every age, as to the genuineness of which we have no reasonable ground of doubt. But the case of the penitent thief is accompanied with evidence the most irresistible and convincing. Who can doubt that on the cross a sinner was converted from the evil of his ways, a soul saved from death, and a multitude of sins hid ? When the Lord writeth up the people whom he hath formed for himself, he will count that this man was born again on Calvary. While I run over the credible marks of a saving change which he exhibited, let it be your employment, my brethren, to examine and see whether they are to be found in you also.

He confessed himself to be a sinner, and worthy of death, when no creature exacted this confession, and when it could be of no earthly advantage to him. His heart was penetrated with a reverential fear of God, which made him not only refrain from offending him himself, but shudder at hearing what was offensive to him from the lips of another. He entertained just, and high, and honourable views of the Saviour. He looked to him on the cross, and placed all his hopes of salvation on his merciful remembrance of him. He prayed to him, and committed his soul to him, as the Lord of the invisible world. He gave every evidence which was in his power of the truth of his faith, repentance, and love. His hands and feet were immovably fixed to the tree. Nothing was left free to him but his heart and his tongue, and these he dedicated wholly to God, and employed to the honour of Christ. His conduct corresponded to the inspired criterion, and verified it : " With the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." He not only deplored his own sin, but he also faithfully, yet meekly, reproved the sin of his companion and of the multitude which surrounded him, and used all the means which were in his power to arrest their ungodly career, and to bring them to repentance. He was clothed with humility. His affections were set on things above, and not on things on the earth. His conversation was in

heaven. No corrupt communication proceeded from his mouth, but that which was good to the use of edifying. All bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking he put away from him, with all malice ; he was kind, tender-hearted, forgiving ; and was not this a proof that God, for Christ's sake, had forgiven him ? Who imagines that if this man had been let down from the cross, he would have returned to his old companions and his old practices ? Who doubts that he that stole would have stolen no more, but have wrought with his hands that he might give to him that needeth ; that he would have been a bright and living example of renovation ; that he would have joined himself to the apostles, and continued steadfastly in their doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayer ? Would to God that all that hear me this day were both almost and altogether such as this malefactor was, except the nails by which he was affixed to the tree !

Secondly, We have here a distinguished proof of the power of divine grace. Speaking of what he had been, and contrasting it with what he had become, Paul exclaims, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was exceeding abundant !" We cannot think of the conversion of this man without making the same reflection. He had been a great sinner, an ignorant, profane, ungodly, lawless, hardened ruffian. But O ! how changed from what he was !—so much so, that his former associates, who had known him most intimately, could not now know him to be the same person. He is, indeed, become a new man, a new creature ; "old things are passed away ; behold, all things are become new." The lion, who had gone about seeking whom he might devour, is changed into the lamb ; the blasphemer into a preacher of righteousness ; the robber into a reprover of vice. And how sudden the transformation ! He came to the cross with all the evil passions rankling in his breast, and he had scarcely been affixed to it, when their poison was plucked out, and they gave place to mildness, gentleness, and compassion for the sufferings of others ; he came to it with his mouth filled with cursing and bitterness, and when upon it, we find him employed only in praying and exhorting ; he was lifted up on the cross polluted with the blood of others, he was taken down from it washed from his sins in the blood of Christ ; he was suspended as a malefactor, and he died as a martyr. What can withstand or resist the power of the grace which produced such a change as this ? What is too hard, what can be difficult for it ? It can pardon the greatest sins, subdue the strongest corruptions, eradicate the most deep-rooted prejudices, cure the most inveterate habits ; in a word, change the most desperately wicked heart.

Thirdly, Contemplate in this scene an instance of late conversion. It was the last hour with this malefactor. His days were numbered, and the last of them had dawned on him in as hopeless a condition as ever,—with all his sins upon him, unrepented of, and unpardoned, without the smallest preparation for appearing before his righteous and im-

partial Judge. He was brought out of his cell, he was led away to be crucified, he was lifted up upon the cross, he hung over the yawning pit which was ready to receive him, when the Saviour, who was at his right hand, had compassion on him, apprehended him by his grace, and plucked him as a brand from the fire. Miraculous escape! Wonderful intervention! Ineffable expression of the patience and mercy of him who is God and not man! In one and the same day this man was in the gall of bitterness and in the delights of paradise, associated with felons and admitted into the society of angels, in concord with Belial and in fellowship with Christ. This singular fact is recorded in Scripture, and we know that whatever was written aforetime was written for our learning. It teaches us by example what our Saviour taught by parable, that persons may be called into God's vineyard at the last hour, and that he will bestow upon them the gift of eternal life through Christ Jesus, as well as upon those who have borne the burden and heat of the day. And shall their eye be evil because he is good? Or, shall we be ashamed or afraid to produce this example, and to point to the encouragement which it holds out, because some will speak evil of the good ways of God, or others will abuse his tender mercy to their own perdition? No; while there is life there is hope—while sinners are on God's footstool, they may look up to the throne of his grace. He waits to be gracious; his long-suffering is salvation. This message we are warranted to carry into the cell of the convict—to the bedside of the dying profligate—and to proclaim it in public to persons of all ages. The most hoary-headed sinner in this assembly may find mercy of the Lord. Though thou hast provoked God, and grieved him for forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, fourscore years, yet to-day, after so long a time—to-day, if thou wilt hear his voice, and not harden thy heart, thou shalt enter into his rest, and be received into his glory. You need not say, who shall ascend to heaven to bring Christ down? He who was near to the thief on the cross, is near to you in the preaching of the cross. O then delay not to improve the precious season which will not last long, which passeth away, and will soon come to a close; look to him, believe on him, cry to him, confessing your sins, "Lord, remember me, now when thou art come into thy kingdom." Look on him whom you have pierced by your iniquities, until your hearts are smitten with the sight, and you are made to mourn as for an only son, and to be in bitterness as for a first-born; and he will heal you by the virtue of his stripes, and by the sovereign efficacy of his free Spirit.

But this example, while it invites to repentance, gives no encouragement to presumption. It has been justly remarked, that one instance of conversion at the latest period of life, has been recorded in the Bible, that none may despair; and but one instance, that none may presume, or delay this important work to the last. Not to insist on the singularity of this man's situation, and the propriety of the Redeemer displaying the power of his grace, and the virtue of his blood, when hang-

ing on the cross, by a signal and extraordinary act of mercy, the history of the converted malefactor affords not a shadow of encouragement or excuse to those who resist the calls of the Gospel and procrastinate repentance ; for he had not enjoyed these calls, nor is there any good reason for thinking that he ever heard or saw the Saviour before. It is sinful to limit the Holy One, and to despair of his mercy and ability to save in the most extreme case ; but it is awfully sinful, it is a fearful tempting and provoking of the Most High, to delay repentance in the hope of finding mercy at a future period. When put into plain language, it just amounts to this, "I will continue in sin because the grace of God abounds : I will go on to disobey him, and rebel against him, and affront him, in the confidence that he will pardon me whenever I shall be pleased to turn to him, and that he will receive me when I am weary of sinning, and can no longer find pleasure in it." If this is not to "sin wilfully after having received the knowledge of the truth,"—if it is not to "sin the sin unto death," it is something very like it. What can such persons expect but that God will pronounce against them his fearful oath of exclusion, cease to strive with them any longer by his Spirit, say to the ministers of his word and of his providence, "Let them alone," and give them up to the uncontrolled operation of their own corruptions, increased and aggravated by indulgence, and by the influence of the god of this world ? How know you that you shall have time for repentance ? You may be struck dead in a single moment, in the very act of sinning with a high hand. Or you may be struck motionless and senseless, without a tongue to confess your sins or your faith in the Saviour,—without an eye to read the record of salvation—without an ear to hear its gladdening sounds from preacher or friend—without a memory to recollect what you have heard or known of it. Although time for reflection should be granted you, and though the gate of mercy should stand open before you, yet your soul may be so filled with darkness, and unbelief, and remorse, that you cannot perceive the way of escape, and may die, like Judas, in despair. Though quaintly expressed, there is much truth in the saying, "True repentance is never too late, but late repentance is seldom true." How many instances are there of "repentance" in sickness, and in the prospect of death, being "repented of." Judicious persons, who have had occasion to deal with the irreligious in such circumstances, have a saddening report to make of the result of their experience. How many of them have died as they lived, ignorant, insensible, hardened ! Of those who survived, and were delivered from the terrors of death, how many "returned, like the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire !" And among those who died with the accents of penitence on their lips, of how few can they speak but in the language of trembling hope ! We often hear of the contrition of condemned malefactors, and it is not uncommon to represent them as having exhibited decided marks of conversion in their cells and on the scaffold ; but there is reason to think

that credulity is mingled with charity in these reports. Charity should dispose us to form the most favourable hopes of individuals ; but when we speak on this subject, and especially when we make our sentiments public, we should recollect that charity for the dead may be cruelty to the living. If such persons were to be pardoned and restored to life, we may judge what would be the result with multitudes of them, from what we see in the case of those who have been recovered from a dangerous sickness. How rarely do we meet, in such cases, with the unequivocal proofs of sincere repentance which were evinced in the crucified malefactor !

Fourthly, See here a striking example of the different effects produced by the preaching of Christ crucified. To the one malefactor the cross was the savour of life unto life, to the other it was the savour of death unto death ; to the former it was the power of God unto salvation, to the latter it was a stumblingblock ; it softened the heart of the former, it hardened the heart of the latter ; it prepared the one for heaven, it rendered the other twofold more a child of hell. Here we perceive the exceeding riches of sovereign grace, and the desperate depravity of the human heart, when left to its native operation. O the blindness, the infatuation, the obduracy of this impenitent malefactor, whom neither the reproofs and contrition of his companion, nor the meekness and patience of Jesus, nor the acts of grace and clemency which he witnessed, could soften ! He saw the rich treasures of grace opened ; he heard the humble petition of his comrade ; he heard the gracious return made to it, granting him more than he had ventured to ask ; he was a witness to the kingdom of heaven being bestowed on a fellow-convict,—and yet he remained proud and impenitent, and would not bend his mind to ask what he might have freely received. Yet this is no strange or uncommon thing ; it is every day verified in multitudes who enjoy the Gospel.

Fifthly, How mysterious and manifold the ways by which God imparts the knowledge of his mind to men—makes those that are blind to see, and those that see to be blind ! He opened the eyes of an eastern astrologer to behold afar off “the Star that should come out of Jacob, and the Sceptre that should rise out of Israel ;” and when, blinded by “the wages of unrighteousness,” he rushed on obstinately in the path of wilful disobedience, disregarding the messenger of death who opposed him, the mouth of the dumb ass was opened to rebuke the madness of the prophet. When “the scornful men” who ruled the people of Jerusalem rejected “him who came in the name of the Lord to save them,” shut their eyes against the light of his heavenly doctrine and of his divine works, blasphemed both the one and the other, and persecuted their Author to the death, a heathen ruler was made to confess his innocence, and to predict the glory of his kingdom ; and although he meant not so, but it was in his heart to mortify those who yielded him a feigned and reluctant obedience, and had urged him on to an act against which his

conscience remonstrated, yet Providence overruled his designs and actions to the accomplishment of its own purposes ; and in consequence of this, the inscription which he had ordered to be affixed on the cross, and which he refused to recall or to modify, became the instrument of savingly enlightening an ignorant malefactor, and enabling him to silence and still the increasing tumult of those who maliciously or ignorantly reviled the Holy One and the Just. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !

Sixthly, What a small portion of truth will be of saving benefit to a person when accompanied by the blessing of the divine Spirit ! Who teacheth like God ! When the vision of all is to be learned as a sealed book, and the eyes of the prophets and their rulers and seers are covered, he can unveil its mysteries to the most ignorant and uninitiated. By means of a few words he can make the outcasts of society wise to salvation, while those who despised and cursed them have "precept upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little," and yet all the effect is that they "fall backwards, and are broken, and snared, and taken." What slender means will prove successful when God puts his hand to the work ! What a small portion of truth will irradiate the mind of a sinner, and dispel its darkness, when the Spirit of God makes way for it, and accompanies it home with his secret and irresistible influence ! At the beginning he had only to say, "Let there be light, and there was light ;" and a single word will call a sinner from darkness into marvellous light. "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee," said Jesus to Nathanael, who instantly replied, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God ; thou art the King of Israel !" a reply which drew an expression of surprise from Jesus. The effect of electricity is not more instantaneous. "Thou hast had five husbands ; and he whom thou now hast is not thine husband," said the same divine Preacher to the Samaritan woman ; and what was her report to her townsmen of the effect produced by this saying ? "Come, see a man that told me ALL things that ever I did !" Who can calculate the extent of the wonderful discoveries which the smallest portion of divine truth entering into the soul will produce ? Let in the light of day by the smallest chink into a dark room or cellar, and you will see ten thousand motes floating and dancing in the circling wave of its beams. Every portion of truth is a ray from the Sun of Righteousness, and his rays, like those of the natural sun, are divisible to an inconceivable degree, and every the minutest particle possesses the essential properties of the luminary from which it emanates, and accordingly is capable of enlightening, quickening, cheering, invigorating, and making fruitful in every good work. All things that are reprobable are made manifest by the light, for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. No doubt, where the word of truth is clearly revealed, and where it is faithfully preached and unfolded according to the ordinance of Heaven, free from any mixture of error or of human inventions, we have reason

to expect that the most extensive good will be done. But we must not limit the Spirit of truth, who hath wrought hitherto, and doth work, and will work, sovereignly as he willeth. When persons are placed in unfavourable circumstances, we know not what small means may produce saving effects. Though we are commanded to "cease from the instruction which causeth to err from the words of knowledge," and are not to receive into our houses, or bid God-speed to the teachers of "another Gospel," yet the Spirit of God, who is present where we cannot be with safety or without sin, may bless (and we doubt not he has blessed) such portions of divine truth as proceed from erroneous teachers to the conversion or sanctification of his chosen. Yea, words spoken without any serious or fixed design, perhaps thrown out in the way of scoffing and derision, may fall into the conscience and heart of a sinner, take root there, and bring forth fruit unto life eternal ; and when this is at any time verified, both the word and the power by which it is made effectual, appear the more evidently to be of God.

SERMON VI.

THE CONFESSION OF THOMAS.

"My Lord, and my God."—JOHN, XX. 28.

THE Sun of Righteousness rose, like the natural sun, early but slowly, gradually scattering the darkness and the clouds. First the grave of Christ was seen to be open ; then it was seen to be empty ; and then the grave-clothes were found lying, carefully wrapt up, denoting that the illustrious prisoner had neither been taken away by violence, nor gone out hastily or by flight. First, an angel announced his resurrection, and then he showed himself alive. First he appeared to one of his disciples, next to two of them, and lastly to them all. In this chapter we have an account of the first appearance which he made to his disciples collectively. They had already received a message from him by Mary Magdalene ; one of their number had also seen him ; but still they doubted. Now, he not only appeared in the midst of them, and spoke to them, but he showed them his hands and his side, the former bearing the mark of the nails by which he had been fixed to the cross, and the latter the scar of the spear by which he was pierced. And now all the doubts of those present were dissipated. "Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord."

But one of their number, Thomas, called in the Greek Didymus, was absent during this interview. On his arrival, his brethren informed him that they had seen the Lord. One would have thought that the concurring testimony of so many would have commanded his belief. But he remained incredulous ; and expressed his unbelief in very strong terms : "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe." Next Lord's day, the disciples being assembled, and Thomas with them, Jesus appeared in the midst of them, and having saluted them, desired the faithless apostle to take the satisfaction which he had required. "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands ; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side : and be not faithless, but believing." This was irresistible ; and Thomas cried out in a transport, "My Lord, and my God !"

The great secret, my brethren, of profiting by ordinances, is to wait on them in the faith of Christ's spiritual presence in them, according to

his promise, "Lo, I am with you alway!" And our assembling together at this time will be for the better and not for the worse, if the words read shall be blessed for correcting our unbelief and strengthening our faith. Let us then, in dependence on the Spirit who testifies of Christ,

I. Make a few observations from the text in its connection.

II. Open up the import of the exclamation.

I.—1. The text in its connection leads me to observe, that our Lord Jesus put peculiar honour on the first day of the week. On that day he rose from the dead; and by that very act it was distinguished from all the other days. As God rested from all his works in creation on the seventh, so did Christ rest from his works in redemption, and declare them complete, by rising from the grave on the first day. On this day he appeared to the women, to Peter, to the two disciples travelling to Emmaus, and to the ten apostles. The evangelist is very particular in naming the day; for though it had been mentioned before, he does not satisfy himself with saying, "Now the same day in the evening," but adds, "being the first day of the week." On the ensuing first day he renewed his visit. And it was on the same day of the week that the Spirit descended on the apostles. These acts were sufficient to dedicate that portion of time to a sacred use; for divine authority having already set apart one day in seven, there was no necessity for such an express appointment in transferring the Sabbath from one day of the week to another. The analogy between the works of creation and redemption, as recognised in Scripture—the reason of the thing, the example of Christ and his apostles, and the name given to that day by the Spirit of God—constitute an ample warrant for our faith in keeping it holy to the Lord, as the Christian Sabbath, and for our expecting his spiritual presence on it. There is no superstition in looking for a special blessing on the first day of the week. There is a hallowing influence in the thought, "This is the LORD'S DAY;"—"This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save *now*, I beseech thee, O Lord! I beseech thee, send *now* prosperity." The highest attainment on this side heaven is to be "in the spirit on the Lord's day."

2. It is good to be found in the meetings of the disciples of Christ, especially on his own day. It was when the disciples were assembled that Jesus came and stood in the midst of them, and said, "Peace be unto you," and, breathing on them, said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost." In like manner, on the day of Pentecost, "they were all with one accord in one place," and were all filled with the Holy Spirit. In consequence of Thomas being absent when his brethren convened on the first Lord's day, he missed a meeting with Christ, and remained in a state of painful suspense, or rather positive unbelief, so far as the great fact of the resurrection was concerned. And it was not until he was found with

his brethren on the following Sabbath that he obtained relief and a cure. The fearers of the Lord have always felt a desire after, and a delight in, public ordinances. The Lord loved the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob; and accordingly "thither the tribes went up to Israel's testimony, to give thanks to the name of the Lord." And a special promise is attached to Christian assemblies, however small: "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." Every true worshipper has the promise of Christ's presence; but "two are better than one, and a threefold cord is not easily broken." If a number of persons should be invited to an entertainment by a great man, though he should not make his appearance at the time of their assembling, yet, on comparing their cards of invitation, they would be confirmed in their expectation of seeing him. We do not know what a loss we sustain by carelessly or unnecessarily absenting ourselves from public ordinances, even for a single diet. Perhaps Thomas was with his brethren in the forenoon, but he was absent in the afternoon of the day when the Lord came among them.

3. Remark, again, that however genuine the experience of others may be, and whatever advantages may be derived from their report of what they have seen and felt, yet these will not supply the room of personal observation and experience. The disciples no doubt acquainted their absent brother with all that they had seen and heard—what Jesus said to them, and what he showed them—but it produced no effect. One glance of an object, or a slight tasting of it, will give us more satisfactory acquaintance with it than the most minute and lengthened description. "O taste and see that God is good." The greatest prejudices have sometimes fled at the hearing of a single sermon—a single sentence. "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" said Nathanael. "Philip saith unto him, Come and see." Jesus had only to say, "When thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee."—"Rabbi! thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel!" "Come," said the woman of Samaria, "see a man which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?"—"Now," said her countrymen, "we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." Reported sermons, and notes of sermons, are generally insipid; like dry crusts, they would require a keen appetite. We may recollect the words, but perhaps the feeling with which we heard them is gone, or greatly abated. "Did not our heart burn within us while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures?" It is easy to repeat words; not so easy to impart feelings.

4. Let us observe that unbelief is very unreasonable and extravagant in its demands. How strikingly do we see this exemplified in the conduct of this disciple! He had a sufficiency of evidence already in the testimony of his brethren, whom he knew to be honest men, well acquainted with their Master, and not more prepossessed with the

hope of seeing him alive again than he himself was. And then he was not called to rest his faith on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God ; for the resurrection of Christ on the third day had been testified beforehand by the prophets and by Jesus himself. If not contented with this testimony, one would have thought that all he required would have been to see his Master with his own eyes, and talk with him. But no, this would not satisfy him. Well, suppose thou shouldst see the print of the nails on his hands, will that do ? No ; “I must put my finger into them.” Is that all ? No ; “I must thrust my hand into his side, else I will not believe.” Never, sure, was there anything so near to total and wilful unbelief as this ! And had it pleased Infinite Wisdom that these memorials of humiliation should have been laid aside—had the Saviour not chosen to bear the marks of the nails and the spear on his resurrection body, where, Thomas, would have been thy faith, and where thy salvation ? Here, as in a mirror, you may see the unreasonableness of infidelity in every age. Its demands increase as they are answered ; its objections resemble the heads of the fabled monster, which were no sooner cut off than others, as hideous as the former, rose in their place. What a salvation did God work at the Red Sea ! But they no sooner wanted water, than they murmured. Behold, he clave the rock, and the waters gushed out ; “but can he give bread also ? can he provide flesh for his people ?”—“If the Lord would make windows in heaven, might this thing be ?”—“What sign showest thou, that we may see and believe thee ?”—“If he be the King of Israel, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe him.” O ! how like is the language of the friends of Christ sometimes to that of his enemies ! How stumbling to weak disciples ! how hardening to the ungodly !

5. Observe that the Saviour is very condescending, as well as forgiving, in curing unbelief. It was prophesied of him, “The bruised reed he will not break, and the smoking flax he will not quench ;” and often did he verify this part of his character in his treatment of the weak and dejected. But here is a case which does not seem to come under that rule. Here is a proud, conceited, obstinate disciple, who thinks himself strong, and despises his brethren as silly and credulous men. But the strength of men is weakness in the sight of God, and our Lord pitied him in his fancied elevation. He knew how to mortify his pride by curing his unbelief. He had much to forgive all his disciples. They had forsaken him in the hour of his trial ; they had forgotten the words that he had spoken unto them while he was yet with them. And how does he resent this ? He puts them to shame by kindness and condescension—by doubling his favours to them. While they continued with him in his temptations, he only called them “friends ;” but now “he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” “Go to my brethren, and say, I ascend unto my Father and your Father.” But the grace of our Lord was conspicuous in the case of Thomas. Great spirits will not be dictated to by their inferiors ; but Christ accommodates himself to the

foolish fancy and wayward humour of this disciple ; suffers himself to be prescribed to ; grants the demand made on him in all its extent ; bares his wounds, and exposes them to be raked and roughly handled, to heal an inveterate and morbid incredulity. "This is not the manner of man, O Lord !" And so it was felt by the humbled and convicted disciple, when he exclaimed, "My Lord, and my God !"

6. Observe finally, that there is sometimes a very sudden change effected in the minds and exercise of erring and undutiful Christians. Sometimes it is gradual. While they are musing or listening to the word of God, the fire begins to burn, and gradually increases until it bursts into a flame which cannot be contained, as in the case of the disciples on the road to Emmaus. At other times it breaks forth all at once, as in the case of Thomas. In a moment all his doubts had fled, and the triumph of faith was proclaimed in the exclamation which he uttered, "My Lord, and my God !"

II. Let us open up the import of the exclamation. And in doing so, it is not enough to consider the import of the words ; we ought to enter into the feelings of the speaker, and thus to make them our own, and, as it were, light our torch at his flame. It was not any single sentiment or feeling, such as faith, or love, or joy, which actuated the apostle at this moment ; but a mixed emotion, in which various feelings were blended together, and heightened each other. Let us analyse the complex emotion.

1. The exclamation is expressive of the fullest and most satisfying persuasion. Thomas is no longer faithless, but believing. He is now fully persuaded of what he formerly doubted and disbelieved. Conviction has flashed on his mind. The evidence is irresistible and overwhelming. Not the shadow of a doubt remains. "It is the Lord himself, and not another. This is no spectre or phantom—there is no imposition or illusion here." All his brethren could not formerly persuade Thomas that his Master was risen ; but the whole world could not now have persuaded him that he was in his grave.

And thus it is when the Spirit of Christ opens the understandings of men to understand the Scriptures, which then bring their own evidence along with them, and produce a clear, lively, and unhesitating conviction of their truth, and of the certainty of the things contained in them. Those who formerly disbelieved or stood in doubt, cry out, "Now we believe—we believe and are sure." They cavil no more, they contradict no more, they inquire no more. They acquiesce in and set their seal to what God reveals, are so satisfied of its truth that they can venture their all, for time and eternity, upon it ; and although their knowledge may be but slender and imperfect compared with that of others, yet their faith is strong and adhesive, like that of the female martyr, who said, "I cannot dispute for Christ, but I can die for him." And this persuasion is most satisfying to the soul. A state of unbelief

is to all, but especially to the Christian who has once tasted the peace of believing, a state of bondage and oppression. To be in suspense is to be in pain ; to be in suspense as to anything on which our happiness depends, is to be in agony. When once persuaded, the believer feels as if a millstone had been lifted off his heart. He breathes freely, he speaks boldly. "I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted." "We that have believed, do enter into rest."

2. It is expressive of ingenuous shame and deep contrition. Thomas was convinced that he had been "faithless," and this was now no trivial or excusable thing in his eye. The same word, and the same symbols which conveyed the evidence of the resurrection and presence of his Master to his understanding, carried a sharp rebuke to his heart. "Fool that I was, and slow of heart to believe ! How many proofs had I of his power—of his divinity ! Did he not rebuke my unbelief at the grave of Lazarus ? Having seen him raise others, why should it have appeared a thing incredible that he should rise himself ? Did I not hear him say, 'The Son of man must be killed, and rise on the third day ? I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again.' I have erred, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God." This was exercise pleasing to Christ, and which he took care to excite and to cherish, by upbraiding him because of his unbelief, in the mortifying but salutary language, "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed ; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed !"

There is the closest connection between the exercises of Christian belief and godly sorrow. No sooner is the eye of faith opened and fixed upon a pierced Redeemer, than it is to be seen glistening with the tear of repentance. The Spirit reproves the world of sin, because they believe not on Christ. Though there were nothing which a believer had to acknowledge but his unbelief, it would be sufficient to cover him with the blush of confusion. If you never felt shame and compunction for your former unbelief, you have reason to fear you have not yet believed. The well-affected believer feels at resisting the lowest evidence of the truth ;—not only at making God a liar, but at giving the lie to his fellow-creatures. "I said in my haste, All MEN are liars." Instead of pleading ignorance as an excuse, looking upon error as innocent, or pronouncing unbelief involuntary, he is ready to acknowledge that his ignorance, and error, and unbelief, proceeded from the depravity of his heart, creating prejudices against the truth, or making him careless and indifferent about it ;—from his pride, presumption, earthliness, selfishness, sluggishness,—from his forgetfulness of, and aversion to divine things, and enmity to the character of God, as exhibited both in the Law and in the Gospel. A recovered believer is at once confounded and humbled in looking back on his criminal and inexcusable behaviour—and even on his doubts, his perplexities, his ignorant mistakes, and hasty misconstructions of the word and works of God. "So foolish was

I and ignorant ; I was as a beast before thee." "Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy."

3. It is expressive of clear and enlarged views of the character of Christ. It is erroneous to say, as some have said, that the disciples of Christ, during his personal ministry, did not believe his divinity. There is abundant proof to the contrary. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." "He manifested forth his glory, and his disciples believed on him." He taught them that he and his Father are one, and that he who had seen him had seen the Father ; and to the disciple speaking in our text, he said, "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also ; and henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." "Thou," said Peter in the name of the rest, "art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Their knowledge of this, however, as well as other truths, was then less clear, and was sometimes overclouded. The veil of his humiliation and sufferings hid the splendour of his deity, and rendered it difficult for them to apprehend it distinctly and steadily. But he was declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead. He rose as the sun emerges from a dark cloud, or rather a fearful eclipse, and in his own light they saw him clearly to be "the Word, which was from the beginning, which was with God, and which was God." Accordingly, Thomas not only recognised him as his Lord or Master, but as his divine Master—"My Lord and my God !"

Faith is knowledge, and all true and saving knowledge of Jesus Christ is gained by believing the testimony of God. But faith may be increased, both intensively and extensively. There is not only a deep or firm conviction of what was hesitatingly believed, but there is also a more enlarged view of the objects believed. This last is commonly called Christian knowledge, and we are exhorted to add it to faith. "I know whom I have believed." Besides "the full assurance of faith," there is what the apostle calls "the full assurance of understanding." When a Christian has his faith restored and reinvigorated, it is commonly accompanied with an enlargement of his knowledge. The very proofs which are necessary to restore our confidence in a friend, after we have suffered it to be shaken, furnish us with new and additional information of his character. We know him better than ever. When Christ stretched out his hands, and bared his side to the view of his disciples, he shed a flood of light as to his real character upon the opened mind of Thomas. "What is this? This is none other but the grace, the condescension, and kindness of God !"—"My God !"

4. It is expressive of warm affection. The appellations are endearing and tender. Not like, "Lord, is it I?" or that of Thomas on a former occasion, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest ; and how

can we know the way?" That was like a cold, though respectful address to a stranger or wayfaring man. Some have supposed from the language of Thomas about the death of Lazarus, and during our Lord's valedictory discourse, that he was "a man of rough, morose temper, and apt to speak peevishly." I should rather be inclined to think that he was naturally of a warm, affectionate disposition, and open withal, though somewhat suspicious and fearful. There was love to Christ in the heart of this disciple during his most gloomy and sullen mood of incredulity; and though it may appear paradoxical, it is true that, if he had loved Jesus less, he would not have been so incredulous as to his resurrection, or at least would not have expressed his feeling so strongly. The common proverb indeed says, "What we wish, we easily believe." But a wish is one thing, and a desire is another. The objects of vulgar credulity are generally matters which engage the fancy rather than the heart. When, however, we have lost any object on which our affections are much set, and in which our happiness is bound up, it is not so easy to believe its restoration. When the patriarch's sons returned and told him, "Joseph is yet alive, and he is governor over all the land of Egypt," "Jacob's heart fainted, for he believed them not." He thought it too good news to be true. Similar to this was Thomas's state of mind. "Do not mock me, my brethren. Ask me not to believe it; I would not believe my own eyes; for I would be afraid that my heart had misled them." And this suggests a difference between the infidelity of unrenewed persons, and the fits of incredulity into which genuine Christians fall. The former may be traced to hatred against the truth, or settled indifference to it; the latter are consistent with love to the truth, which may be discerned through the doubts and objections of a saint, as the sun may be discerned through a cloud. As there was a great difference between Peter's denying, and Judas's betraying of his Master, so between the behaviour of Thomas in disbelieving the resurrection of Christ, and the conduct of the Jews who contradicted and blasphemed. I say not this to excuse unbelief or even doubting in any. There is always culpable ignorance and weakness in such exercise; and there is sometimes not a little pride and obstinacy. "Be not faithless, but believing."

Though there may be love, genuine love to Christ, where there is partial unbelief and darkness and fear, yet these feelings have always a tendency to weaken its influence. Love exists; but it exists, not by them, but in spite of them. It exists like fire under ashes, and when they are blown away, it manifests itself, kindles, and blazes forth. What is altogether unknown or discredited cannot excite our love, and what is indistinctly perceived, and imperfectly believed, will excite it but feebly.

There is much selfishness in our regret for departed friends, and our felt loss makes our love to them appear greater to our minds than it

really is. But when a lost friend is restored, and we again embrace him, our selfishness as well as our regret is swallowed up in the overflowings of disinterested affection. There was something in the feelings of Thomas at this moment resembling the love of the blessed in heaven, which alone can fully answer the description of the beloved disciple. "There is no fear in love; for perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

"Faith worketh by love." There are, too, in the manifestations by which the Christian is recovered from his incredulity, such proofs, on the part of the Redeemer, of goodness, faithfulness, forbearance, forgiveness, condescension, and tender compassion, as cannot fail to melt the heart and add gratitude to affection. "My Lord, and my God, how much hast thou done and suffered for me, since we last parted, ingrate and faithless that I am! What are these wounds in thy hands? Ah! those with which thou wast wounded in the house of thy friends—wounded *by me*! This is thy body, broken for me. By thy stripes I am healed." Thus Thomas loved much, because he was forgiven much.

5. It is expressive of heartfelt joy. "Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord." And what had hindered our disciple from sympathising with them, and sharing of their pleasurable emotions? Nothing but his unbelief. They had all reason for joy when they saw him again. The report of his resurrection was like a new gospel to them—glad tidings of great joy. The doctrine of his decease was transfigured before them! What they could not formerly bear to think of, was now all their salvation, all their desire, and all their gloriation. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." The offence of the cross has ceased, and been changed into attraction. "He was delivered for our offences, and he has been raised again for our justification." The height to which our joy rises upon any reverse, is in proportion to the depth of our previous grief and dejection; and in this respect, that of Thomas must have been very great, in consequence of the strength of his former doubts, and the duration of his suspense. That which strengthens faith, exhilarates the heart. "Believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." And there is sometimes a tumult of joy which needs to be allayed, and causes a conflict with faith, like opposing tides in a frith. "They believed not for joy: Then he said to them again, Peace be unto you!" Compose yourselves, as if he had said, and listen to the commission and instructions which I have to give you.

6. It is expressive of homage and adoration. This is implied in the name which the disciples gave to him commonly, The Lord; but it is more decidedly expressed in the appellations in our text, "My Lord, and my God." It is said of the women to whom he first appeared, that "they held him by the feet and worshipped him." We are not told that this was the posture in which Thomas made his confession, but we can scarcely doubt that it was. At any rate, no bodily attitude could

express adoration so strongly as the exclamation which burst from his lips, as soon as the scales of unbelief fell from his eyes.

It is not by an act of subjection or allegiance to Christ as a King, that a sinner is justified : faith in him as a priest is the justifying act ; but if the first gracious act is believing, the second is an act of obeisance and dedication, and both may be expressed by the same words, and these the first words which proceed from the opened lips of a converted sinner, or a recovered saint. "I am the Lord's." "Truly, Lord, I am thy servant."

7. It is expressive of an appropriating claim. I mention this last, because it is interwoven with, and runs through all the feelings we have been describing. What would it have availed our disciple to be persuaded that Jesus had risen, had he not looked on him as his Redeemer ? Conceive for a moment the horror which Judas, if he had been alive, must have felt at the sight of the print of the nails and the scar ! It was the relation in which Thomas stood to him that deepened his shame, as it did that of Ezra : "O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to thee, my God !" This imparted an unction to all the new discoveries which he had obtained of the glory of Christ—"the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, *my Lord*." This was at once the cause and the token of his love to Christ. He loved him because he was his Lord, and he called him his Lord because he loved him. There is the *my* of love, as well as of faith, and this accented both his joy and his adoration. "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

The inferences that might be drawn from this subject are many ; let the following suffice :

1. See a proof of the divinity of Christ. The indirect proofs of this doctrine, incidentally occurring in Scripture, are not of the least convincing and satisfying nature, and of these the one before us is not the least striking. It is but a poor evasion of the enemies of this doctrine, to say that our text is the language of ecstasy, and not to be understood in a strict sense. Christ surely was calm and composed ; but instead of correcting and guarding the language, he sanctioned it. "Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed"—and thou hast done well, though tardily—"blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed." Believed what ? Just what Thomas had confessed him to be—his God.

2. The subject furnishes a proof of the divine authority of the Gospel. The doctrine of Christ's resurrection is the corner-stone of our faith, whether it be considered in relation to the truth of Christianity, or to the reality and perfection of the atonement. "If Christ be not risen," says the apostle, "then we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ ;" yea, Christ himself would have been a deceiver or deceived, for he gave this out as the sign of his being the Messiah, that he should rise on the third day. And,

in like manner, if Christ is not risen, "our preaching is vain, and your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins." On both these accounts the Scripture is full and explicit in its statements of the evidence on which this truth rests. Of the external and direct evidences, the apostle gives a summary in 1 Cor. xv. 5—8. But there are certain circumstances, specified in the evangelical records, tending strongly to corroborate the testimony of the witnesses of the resurrection, one of the chief of which is their backwardness and aversion to believe the fact; showing that they were neither impostors, nor of that disposition of mind which would have exposed them to be the dupes of deception, by listening to idle reports, or mistaking a phantom for the reality. Of this we have, besides other instances in this chapter, a striking illustration in the case of Thomas. And in all this we see the manifold wisdom of God, in bringing good out of evil, and overruling the infirmities and faults of good men, for the illustration of his own glory, and the strengthening of the faith of his people.

3. Let us see the great value and use of faith. It is the mainspring of Christian activity. It sets the whole soul in motion toward Christ and God. Until faith is produced, or revived, all the affections are locked up, or lie dormant. It enlarges the understanding, it melts the heart into godly sorrow, warms it into love, and elevates it into joy and adoration. Without faith it is impossible to please God, to improve Christ, to enjoy ordinances, or discharge aright any duty. To the incredulous disciple, every molehill is a mountain. All things are possible and easy to him that believeth. Precious faith! Some think that we dwell too much on this grace in our discourses; and when we appeal to the Scriptures as the pattern which we follow, they feel disposed to bring the same charge against the writings of the evangelists and apostles. They do not reflect that faith is the eye of the soul, which takes in all the glories of the spiritual world, and sheds their influence over the mind. Talk to a man born blind of the ravishment which you derive by looking on a beautiful landscape—he can form no idea how a simple movement of those eyeballs, which never imparted to him a single pleasurable emotion, can produce such effects; but let his eyes be opened, all will be light and life without and within. Thomas believes and recognises God his Saviour, and rejoices in him with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

4. The subject affords matter of reproof. We are astonished at the incredulity of this disciple; in reading the account of his behaviour we feel offended; we redden with indignation at his infidel avowal, and are apt to think that there was a waste of condescension on the part of our Lord in acceding to the presumptuous demand with which it was accompanied. But are we better than he? Are we among the blessed ones, who have not seen and yet have believed? Have we not reason to blush for ourselves when we reflect how slow of heart to believe we have been? Are we even yet prepared to join in the believ-

ing exclamation of the recovered disciple, now when our Lord is giving us, in the ordinance of the supper, confirmations to our faith similar to that with which Thomas was favoured; and when he is saying to us, "Behold my hands and my side—the emblems of my death, and the evidences of my resurrection—and be not faithless, but believing"—are we ready to say with this disciple, "My Lord, and my God?"

In fine, my brethren, let us see what it is that renders ordinances effectual—the presence of Christ in them, and the manifestation which he makes of himself through them. The disciples could do nothing towards casting the evil spirit of unbelief out of their brother. It was when Christ was present in the assembly, to speak and to present the symbol, that the cure was effected. O be earnest for this! We have his own promise to plead, "Lo I am with you alway!" And if this day our unbelief is cured, our distressing doubts dissipated, our darkness removed, our heart enlarged, and our mouth opened to make the confession of Thomas, it will be a proof that Christ's presence has been with us—it will afford good evidence of our being benefited by his ordinances—and it will furnish matter for the delightful reflection in future, "O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord and my God!"

SERMON VII.

LOVE TO CHRIST.

"Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee."—JOHN, xxi. 17.

THE explanation between two friends after a variance, is always an interesting scene, and often throws great light on the character both of the offended and offending party. When a person of a generous mind has offended a friend for whom he feels sincere affection and respect, he will look forward with extreme anxiety to his first meeting with him; and though he may be assured that he has been forgiven, he will not be completely at ease until he has heard this from his own mouth, and until mutual explanations and assurances shall have buried the difference. The parting scene between Jesus and Peter was a very distressing one. Just as the disciple had finished his denial of his suffering Master, Jesus cast upon him a look which awakened in his breast a train of unutterable emotions. "The Lord turned and looked upon Peter, and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, and Peter went out and wept bitterly." What his state of mind was during the time that Jesus hung upon the cross and lay in the grave, it is easier to conceive than to describe. All that we know is, that though distressed he was not in despair; for the words which he remembered were a source of comfort, as well as of contrition: "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." The special message which the angel sent to him by the women from the sepulchre was fitted to remove his doubts as to forgiveness: "Go your way, tell his disciples *and Peter* that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you." And this was soon confirmed by his appearing to Peter, before he was seen by the rest of the disciples.¹ What took place at that interview we are not told; but from the silence of Scripture we may infer that nothing was said on the painful subject. This was a proof of the tenderness of our Lord, who would have Peter fully assured of his unabated love to him, before he wounded his spirit by an allusion to his fall. One interview passed after another in the same way. But as the time drew nigh when Jesus was to take his leave of the disciples,

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 5; comp. Luke, xxiv. 39.

he at last came to an explanation. And how delicately is it managed by the compassionate Redeemer! The fall of Peter is not mentioned, while the questions proposed to him, both in their import and in their number, bear upon it, and are calculated to elicit replies which remove the offence he had given by a threefold denial of his Master. All this is done in the presence of his brethren, who had been staggered by his fall, and failed in their duty to their Master, though not so flagrantly as Peter. And now the counsel of Christ begins to be verified in him, "Thou, when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

Three several times was the question proposed, "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" The words of our text relate, first, the effect which this question produced on the mind of Peter when it was repeated the third time; and, secondly, the reply which he gave to it. To each of these we now propose to direct your attention.

I. The effect of the question on the mind of Peter.

When first proposed the question must have startled the apostle. The solemnity of the interrogation, and the particularity with which it was addressed to him, could not fail to excite something more than surprise. This emotion would be heightened when the question was repeated. But when the same question was proposed a third time, a new feeling arose in his mind, and became conspicuous to all who were present. "Peter was *grieved* because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me?" Let us inquire a little into the causes and character of this feeling.

1. He was grieved because the repetition of the question seemed to intimate a suspicion of his love. "Else why ask me the same question again and again, after it has been answered in the affirmative? Does not this imply that he who knows my heart doubts of the sincerity and truth of my profession? Can it be that I have deceived myself,—that I am still deceived,—and that there is still lurking within me some idol, which as a rival divides my affections with my Saviour? If so, then my repeated assurances will be offences, and will dishonour instead of honouring him. Once have I spoken, yea, twice; but I will proceed no farther. Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me." The Lord, who knoweth all things, did not doubt Peter's sincerity; but it was one great design of his interrogatories to produce these thoughts, and to lead his disciple to look more narrowly into his own heart. The neglect of this, or want of a due jealousy over himself, was one cause of his late fall, and had appeared in the rash and repeated protestations of inviolable fidelity which were made by him.

Self-examination is an important Christian duty, and with the same view which our Lord had in thrice putting the question to Peter, does the apostle press this duty, with importunate repetition, on the Corinthians: "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith—prove your

own selves—know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates ?” With this view also it has been established as a standing law in the celebration of our Lord’s supper : “ Let a man examine himself.” But we are here taught that it is not confined to preparation for the communion. We need to examine ourselves after supper—to be questioned after solemn professions and vows. “ *So when they had dined*, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me ?” Nor is this duty called for only when we are attending ordinances. Christ puts his disciples to the question by deeds as well as by words. For example, when he sends affliction upon them, he upon the matter says, “ Lovest thou me ?” When he lays his hand heavily upon them, and visits them with breach upon breach, they are ready, like Peter, to be grieved, and to conclude that he suspects their integrity. This was Job’s trial, when he was tempted to think that God treated him as an enemy, and was thus led to self-examination : “ Show me wherefore thou contendest with me ?” And herein lay the victory of his faith, and the proof of his sincerity, that even in the face of this dreadful suspicion, suggested by the fiery trial to which he was subjected, he could answer Christ’s question in the affirmative : “ Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him—till I die, I will not remove my integrity from me.”¹ This is the reason why afflictions are called trials ; they put us to the question : they urge us to self-inspection. “ Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord.”²

2. Peter was grieved, because the question brought his former failure of love to his remembrance. It is painful to have our friendship suspected ; but especially so if we are conscious of having given reason for this suspicion. His kind and forgiving Master had not upbraided him with his fall ; but Peter had not ceased to upbraid himself. His sin was ever before him. The wound was closed, but it was still green and tender, and felt the gentlest touch. No sooner was the question asked a third time, than he thought of his denying his Master thrice. This renewed the scene, and revived his former feelings. He heard the cock crow. He saw the look which had pierced his heart. And for a moment he felt his former agony. “ Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, Lovest thou me ?”

The Lord does not afflict or grieve his people willingly. He has no pleasure in giving them pain. Having freely forgiven them all their offences, and cast them behind his back, he has no delight in bringing them to their recollection. But this is indispensably necessary for their own good and that of others, as well as for his glory. It is necessary that they should give glory to God by confessing their sins, and renewing their professions of attachment. It is necessary that their public offences should be visited with public marks of displeasure. Hence, while he forgives the iniquities of his children, he takes vengeance on their inventions. How often was David, in the course of Providence,

¹ Job, xiii. 15 ; xxvii. 5.

² Lam. iii. 39, 40.

reminded of his foul fall, particularly by the conduct of Amnon and Absalom ! Indeed it is impossible for believers to discharge the duties of their station, to worship God, to go to the throne of grace, to the house of God or to a communion table, without having their sin brought before them, and being forced to say, "I remember my faults this day. In this place, and in this ordinance, I dishonoured my God and Redeemer."

3. The grief of Peter on this occasion, though a painful, was a salutary feeling. It was good for him that he was thus afflicted. How much better for him to have his wound probed by the gentle hand of his Master, that it might be closed up for ever, than to have it left in a state which would have exposed him to suffer from the rough handling of others, whether friends or foes ! How much better was it that he should be reminded of his fall by One who was ready to accept of the assurances of his love, and to confirm him in his office, than to have the offence afterwards thrown in his teeth by his own conscience ! In fulfilling his ministry, he was often obliged to charge others with the very sin of which he had been guilty. Twice in one of his sermons, preached after the day of Pentecost, we find him using the very word which, but for the interview before us, might have unfitted him for finishing the sentence he had begun, and made his tongue cleave to the roof of his mouth : "Ye DENIED him in the presence of Pilate when he was determined to let him go ; but ye DENIED the Holy One and the Just."¹ This was also the case with Paul, who had to reprove his countrymen for persecuting Jesus in his followers, and contradicting and blaspheming his name, though he himself "was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious ;" but then he had to add, "I obtained mercy."

Such recollections, though for the present not joyous but grievous, cannot fail in the end to be profitable to Christians. They serve to deepen their sense of sin, their humility, their holy fear and jealousy. What Paul says of his first Epistle to the Corinthians, may be applied to the intentions of our Lord in awakening such feelings in the breasts of his penitent disciples : "I did it not for his cause that had done the wrong, nor for his cause that suffered wrong, but that our care for you in the sight of God might appear unto you.—Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance.—For behold, this self-same thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge ! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter."² I may add, that, after shameful falls, such reflections are useful in reviving a sense of Christ's love, and, by leading to renewed professions of attachment, tend to restore confidence between the parties. Grieved as Peter was at being so closely interrogated, his

¹ Acts, iii. 13, 14.

² 2 Cor. vii. 9, 11, 12.

mind would not have been at ease, and he would not have been so familiar with his Master as he had been, if he had not been led at this time to renew his protestations of friendship.

4. Before leaving this branch of the subject, let me observe that the grief of Peter was an evidence of his love to Christ. It answered the question before his lips were opened. Had he not been grieved, it would have been a proof that he did not love his Master. Had he not loved him, and that too in a very strong degree, he would either have answered the third question, as he had the two former, without being visibly hurt by it, or if it had created an unpleasant feeling, it would have been of a very different kind : It would have been anger, not grief. It is only when our love is called in question by a friend, or when we are reminded of a wrong that we have done to one whom we really love, that we are grieved. But of this more afterwards. We proceed to consider—

II. Peter's answer to the question. The question was, in itself, highly appropriate, and calculated to draw forth various emotions besides that of grief. We might have supposed that it would have been "Art thou sorry for having denied me?" But it was proposed by him who knows how to touch the chord which makes the whole soul to vibrate : "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Had Peter been irritated or displeased by this close examination, he would either have repeated his former offence, and broken for ever with his Master, or he would have preserved a sullen silence, or he would have given (as we say) a short answer. But he replies as before, only with somewhat more fervour and earnestness. Formerly he had said, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee;" now he says, "Lord thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." His grief, instead of preventing, prompted him to this profession. He was anxious to remove every shadow of suspicion, and his generous breast would have burst, had he not relieved it by avouching attachment, for the third time, to Him whom he had thrice denied. Let us meditate a little on the manner and matter of the answer which Peter returned to this question. With respect to its *manner*, let me observe,

1. The answer is pertinent and explicit. It is an answer to the question put to him : Lovest thou me? Yea, or nay? And he said, "Yea, Lord." He does not say, "I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." That was a pertinent answer to the question formerly proposed to him, but it would have been impertinent on the present occasion. Had he said, "I own thee as my Master, I honour thee as my Lord and God. I am willing to serve and to follow thee. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" Jesus might have said, "That's not to the purpose; I will afterwards lay my commands upon thee; in the mean time, I wish to be assured of that without which

there can be no obedience acceptable to me. Lovest thou me? Is thine heart right, as my heart is with thy heart?"¹ To this Peter answers directly and explicitly, and we should be prepared to do the same, especially when we are interrogated. Formerly Peter, of his own accord, and without any requisition from his Master, was forward in his professions, and he was reprov'd. But now profession is obediential, and is accepted. "There is a time to keep silence, and a time to speak."

2. It is made with the deepest respect. "Yea, LORD, I love thee." There is no undue familiarity or bold fondness in the manner of expressing his affection. Christ is called God's "dear Son," but he is never once called "our dear Saviour" in the New Testament. When expressions of endearment are employed by the Church, they are modestly veiled under the language of allegory. He was not ashamed to call his disciples "brethren," but the tenderest name by which any of them called him, either before or after his exaltation, was "My Lord," "God, my Saviour;" names expressive of love blended with reverence. "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am."—"A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? if I be a master, where is my fear?"² He has become bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh; but he is our elder brother, and has "a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

3. It is humble. Peter does not say, "I love thee fervently, supremely, or beyond all that I can express." Even when the question was at first put to him in terms which seemed to call for some epithet of this kind, the degree of affection was modestly dropped, or softened into a simple profession of love: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me *more than these?*" "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee"—and the rest died away in the echo. But it was not lost to him who searcheth the heart, as appears from the rejoinder, "Feed my lambs." "Yes," as if he had said, "I know what is in thee, and therefore I will commit to thy care those of mine which require the tenderest and most affectionate nursing. Heaven is the throne on which I am about to sit down, and the earth on which I have been a wanderer is to become my footstool; but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor, and of a contrite heart, and that trembleth at my word." But though thus encouraged, and as it were provoked to it, Peter never rose in his replies to a higher degree. What a contrast to the vociferous and unmeasured, as well as uncalled for, protestations made by him on a former occasion! There is no word here of not being offended, though all should be offended, or of going with him to prison and death. True love delights to express itself in few and simple words. Presumption, hypocrisy, and treachery are loud and loquacious in their professions of friendship and loyalty: they expect to be believed for their much speaking.

¹ 2 Kings, x. 15.

² John, xiii. 13; Mal. i. 6.

4. It is solemn. "Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee." This is an appeal to the omniscience of Christ—a profession made upon oath. To take away all suspicion, and to give the highest possible pledge of his love, he appeals to Him who knew his heart. He had before given his testimony, now he turns his declaration into a deposition, by adding his oath, which, "for confirmation, is an end of all strife." He had formerly accompanied his denial of Christ with an oath, and it was proper that his renewed profession of attachment should be made with the same solemnity. Formerly he had abused this religious ordinance to support a falsehood ; now he employs it for its legitimate purpose, to confirm a truth. Formerly he had used it profanely : "He began to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man ;" now he uses it religiously, and with the utmost reverence : "Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee." The abuse of any ordinance, or the prostitution of it to a bad purpose, is no good reason against the use or application of it to a lawful or holy purpose. What Christians can say to God or to man, they may say, and they will be ready, when properly called, to say with all possible solemnity ; what they can say on their knees in their closet, they will be ready to say at the Lord's table ; and what they can say there they will be ready to ratify by their oath and subscription. "In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the Lord of Hosts." "One shall say, I am the Lord's ; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob ; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the Lord, and surname himself by the name of Israel."¹

Nor is there anything in all this that is inconsistent with Christian humility, or with a sense of our own insufficiency and of the deceitfulness of the heart ; for all that is attested by the appeal is the sincerity of the profession, and it implies a reference to the judgment of the Searcher of hearts, and a desire to obtain his impartial and unerring verdict.

5. It is a true and unfeigned profession. When Peter denied his Lord, conscience charged him with falsehood in the very act of uttering the words, "I know not the man ;" and a single look from Christ covered him with confusion. But now, though grieved at the third question, and though he knew that the omniscient eye of his Master was at that moment penetrating and perusing his inmost soul, he replies with the unflinching firmness of sincerity : "Lord, thou knowest all things ; thou knowest that I love thee." And he to whom the appeal was made, acknowledged its honesty, by committing to Peter anew the precious trust, which he ever afterwards faithfully kept. Hypocrites make a profession of love to Christ, and sometimes with great solemnity and warmth. There are not a few who, like Judas, say, "Hail, Master !" and kiss him, only that they may betray his cause

¹ Isa. xix. 18.

by their ungodly lives, their inconsistency, and tergiversation. And besides these, there is a more refined hypocrisy, of which the persons themselves are not conscious at the time, but which displays itself afterwards. It was said of the Israelites of old, that "their words were good, but their hearts were not sincere." And the Most High himself is introduced saying, "The people have well said all that they have spoken;" but then he adds, "O that there were such an heart in them!" But the unbelief and hypocrisy of some does not disprove the fidelity of others; and, because many who made high professions have proved perfidious, we must beware of involving all who do so under a sweeping charge of hypocrisy. "I said in my haste all men are liars." "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints."¹

We might now advert to the *matter* of Peter's answer—love to Christ. And, in general, I would say that this love is composed of the following elements. It includes, first, a high esteem of him on account of his intrinsic excellences, divine and human, as "the chiefest among ten thousand, yea, altogether lovely." And, secondly, it implies a lively sense of the benefits which he has purchased and bestows, and of the love from which these flow. It proceeds upon a believing view of his free and rich love in undertaking the cause of his people from everlasting, in appearing in the fulness of time to plead it, in dying for them, in visiting their souls and calling them by his grace, in taking them into a near relation to himself, appearing for them in heaven, and dealing kindly and faithfully with them while they are in the world. It is this persuasion and experience of his love which constrains them to love him, and binds them to him by the ties of gratitude.

But, without dwelling on these things at present, I shall merely mention some characteristic marks of genuine love to Christ, with the view of enabling you to return a true answer to the question proposed to Peter, "Lovest thou me?" This question is proposed to us all, and every individual must answer it for himself; and it is one of the deepest importance. Sincere and supreme love to Christ is an indispensable qualification and sure mark of true discipleship. Nothing will compensate for the want of it; and it draws all after it. Christ does not say to Peter, "Dost thou fear me? Dost thou honour me? Dost thou admire me? Dost thou trust me?" He did not ask, "Simon, son of Jonas, how much hast thou wept? How often hast thou fasted?" But, "Lovest thou me?" This is the proof at once of the genuineness of faith and of repentance. If we love not Christ we are none of his, the profession which we make of his name is a lie, and all our religion and attendance on divine ordinances is just so much time wasted and labour lost. Let us then examine ourselves by the marks which characterise this love when it is genuine.

¹ Hos. xi. 12.

And, in the *first* place, love to Christ is intelligent. This property distinguishes it from all enthusiastic emotions, which are sometimes confounded with devout affections, and which spring either from a heated fancy, or the working of animal feelings. These may be produced on susceptible minds by means of warm addresses to the passions, without due care being taken to instil the knowledge of the truth into the understanding. Such rapturous ecstasies are excited equally by truth and error; and accordingly you will find those who are subject to them, as warm and devout when they have embraced an unscriptural system of doctrine, as they were when they professed the doctrine of Christ. Of such persons it may be said, they love they know not what. This kind of feeling our Lord, instead of fostering, uniformly sought to discourage and repress. When one said to him, "Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," our Lord, who perceived that this ardour was not accompanied with any adequate knowledge of what was implied in the engagement, replied: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."¹ When a woman in the crowd, ravished with his doctrine, cried out in an ecstasy, "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked!" he said, "Yea, rather blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it."² When Peter was confident and warm in his professions, he said to him, "Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice." Such also was the strain of his apostles: "This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment."³

The genuine Christian does not talk like one beside himself or possessed, but speaks the words of truth and soberness. If he feels deeply, he also perceives clearly. He can give a reason of his love to Christ, as well as of the hope that he has in him, and renders both with meekness and fear. Though in one sense he loves him whom he hath not seen, yet in another, and no less true sense, he "hath both seen and known him." He hath seen him in the word of truth. He makes no pretensions to any knowledge of him which he has not received from the Scriptures, and gives head to no spirit which would lead him away from "the law and the testimony."

Secondly, Love to Christ seeks an increasing knowledge of him. This is the food on which it lives, and by which it grows: nor is it ever satisfied with what it has attained. "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord."

Thirdly, Love to Christ delights in his ordinances, and leads the person in whom it dwells to observe them regularly and conscientiously. These are the places where he meets with his people, and holds communion with them. True love will fly with eagerness to seek its object wherever it is to be found, and will linger fondly about the spot where

¹ Luke, ix. 58.² Ib. xi. 27.³ Phil. i. 9; Col. ii. 2—4.

it expects to meet him. When the disciples heard of the resurrection of their Master, without waiting to go into Galilee where he had promised to meet with them, they hasted to the place where he had been laid. "Then arose Peter, and ran to the sepulchre;" and though the beloved disciple outran him, Peter was the first to venture into "the place where the Lord lay."¹ On another occasion, such was his eagerness to meet his Lord, that "he girt his fisher's coat unto him, and did cast himself into the sea." If a person is careless in waiting on public ordinances, if he can absent himself from them on the most trifling account, if he has more pleasure in loitering at home, in traversing the fields, or in visiting his friends, how dwelleth the love of Christ in that man? O how unlike him who, at twelve years of age, remained behind his parents in the temple, and said, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

Fourthly, Love to Christ displays itself by a conscientious and universal obedience to his commandments. These are not confined to the moral precepts which he specially inculcated in his personal ministry, such as brotherly love, the forgiveness of injuries, or charity to the poor. The whole moral law of God, which was within his own heart, and which he magnified by obeying its precepts and bearing its penalty, is taken into the administration of grace, and becomes the rule of his government over his redeemed, and the standard of their duty. Consequently, the obedience which they yielded to it is a necessary test of friendship and fidelity to him. "If ye love me, keep my commandments. He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." Mere professions of love are a mockery and insult to him who "knoweth all things." "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you." It is not meant that none are the friends of Christ who transgress any of the commandments; but they yield an habitual obedience to them, and do not live in the allowed violation of any of them. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments." The character of acceptable obedience is, that it proceeds from love; and the character of evangelical obedience is, that it proceeds from the faith of Christ's love. "The love of Christ constraineth us."

A variety of other marks might be insisted on, which I shall state more briefly. True love to Christ displays itself by a fear of displeasing him, and unfeigned sorrow when we have done what has this tendency. It is more afraid of displeasing him than all the world. Peter wept bitterly; and his were the tears of love as well as of penitence. It displays itself by the distress which it feels at whatever dishonours him. Christ and the believer have common friends and common foes. "This thou hast, that thou hatest the deeds of the Nicolaitans, which I also hate."—"Do not I hate all those that hate thee?"—"Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law." It discovers

¹ John, xx. 3—8; Luke, xxiv. 12.

itself by earnest desires and strenuous endeavours to be like him. Love has an assimilating tendency. We naturally imitate those for whom we have an affection, especially if that affection is blended with esteem and respect. "Be ye followers of God, as dear children, and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." It discovers itself by honouring, loving, and delighting in those who bear his image. "Hereby shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." She is not an affectionate wife who does not love her husband's relations. And this love must show itself according to the circumstances in which they are placed, and as if Christ himself were in their circumstances. "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."—"My goodness extendeth not unto thee, but unto the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight." In fine, true love to Christ will manifest itself in suffering for his sake, and according to his will ; in cleaving to him, and confessing him under all circumstances ; in grieving that we love him so little ; in adoring and meditating on his love ; and in desiring to be with him in the sanctuary above, that we may enjoy his society without interruption, behold his glory without the intervention of means, and celebrate the praises of his redeeming love, world without end.

Having laid these marks before you, I may conclude by again urging you to reply to the question of Christ, "Lovest thou me?" Difficult as the question may be, it admits of a satisfactory answer. Had it not been so, Jesus would not have put the question. He would not have pushed the matter to a third interrogatory, if he had not known that the disciple could reply in the affirmative without hypocrisy, without his heart condemning him. Nor would he have appointed an ordinance which was intended only for his friends, and enjoined them to observe it, if he had not promised that his Spirit, witnessing with their spirits, should enable them to say, with truth in the inward part, "We love him who first loved us." The real friends of Christ may have great doubts of their actual believing, and of the genuineness of their love to him. They are deeply grieved on account of the many evidences which they have given of indifference and even of enmity to him. The proofs of their ingratitude, forgetfulness, and unkindness, stare them in the face, and sometimes seal their lips. They complain, and they have good reason to complain, of the coldness of their hearts, and the deadness of their affections. But though they cannot say, in so many words, "Thou knowest that I love thee," still they can say, "O Lord, the *desire* of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee." And when urged by him, they cannot refrain from crying out, "Lord, I love thee ; help thou my want of love." To the question, "Will ye also go away?" they instinctively and resolutely reply : "To whom shall we go ? thou hast the words of eternal life." And if offered their liberty to leave him, they would say, with the manumitted slave under the law : "I love my master, and I will not go free."—"Truly, O Lord, I am thy

servant ; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid : thou hast loosed my bonds." And *that is love.*

"But," methinks I hear some hesitating soul reply, "I do not feel that warmth of affection for Christ which is due to him." You cannot ; for his love passeth returns, as it passeth knowledge. "But I do not feel that love which others have felt for him, and have had freedom to express." Neither durst Peter speak strongly on this head ; and the Saviour graciously dropped the clause in the first question, expressive of the degree of his love, and instead of "Lovest thou me more than these?" simply asked, "Lovest thou me?" He is a condescending catechist—puts the question in different forms—and helps the confused and timid disciple to an answer. "But I have acted an ungrateful part towards him." So had Peter ; and yet the Lord, overlooking his past conduct, and covering it with the mantle of forgiveness, questioned him as to his present exercise ; and the disciple, though humbled, was able to give a suitable reply : "But I am afraid I may falsify my profession." And had not Peter as much reason for that fear ? "Blessed is the man that feareth always."

Think on what he is, and what he hath done for sinners. Do you not love him ? Can you say that you do not ? Would you not wish to love him ? Can you but love him ? Would you not be ashamed of yourself, if you did not love him ? Is it not your desire and prayer that all should love, honour, and serve him ? And have you not such a strong sense of the high obligation which all are under to this exercise, that you can join with the apostle in saying, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema, maranatha"—accursed of the Lord at his coming ?

SERMON VIII.¹

THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

“Unto him that loved us.”—REV. i. 5.

WE have lately spoken of love to Christ as an essential feature in the character of all who belong to him, and the efficient principle of all evangelical worship and acceptable obedience. We are now to enter on a higher theme—to ascend from the stream to the fountain—from the love of a creature of yesterday, to that of the Father of eternity—“unto him that loved us.” A delightful, but a difficult task! We are forcibly reminded here of our Lord’s saying to Nicodemus, when he was staggered at the doctrine of the new birth: “If I have told you earthly things and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?” Love to the person of Christ appears so strange to some, that they would expunge it from the catalogue of Christian virtues, and discourage all pretensions to it as extravagant and enthusiastical; while others, who acknowledge its reasonableness and obligations, are afraid of presumption in laying claim to such a high and mysterious feeling, and think that none but such persons as Peter and Paul and John can return an affirmative answer to the question, “Lovest thou me?” The doctrinal error of the one class, and the practical defect of the other, are to be cured in the same way in which Jesus cured the unbelief of Nicodemus—by revealing the higher mystery. “For,” added he, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” If persons believed the wondrous love of God to sinners, the highest expressions of love to him would not appear unreasonable or extravagant; and if we were more occupied in believing contemplations of that wonderful subject, we would feel our hearts warmed and inflamed by it, and would be constrained to cry out, “We love him, because he first loved us.” Come then, and let us light our torch at the rays of the Sun of righteousness as concentrated in the glass of our text.

Well did it become the inspired writer of this book to speak on such a theme. Who so fitted for discoursing of the love of Christ, as he who was admitted to enjoy such endearing proofs of it, both during the time that he dwelt on earth and after he went to heaven? He was

¹ Preached before the dispensation of the Lord’s Supper, Edinburgh, Nov. 6, 1831.

the disciple whom Jesus loved, on whose breast he usually leaned at supper, and by whose mouth his brethren sought to know their Master's secrets. He was also honoured by a personal sight of the Redeemer in his heavenly glory, and with a revelation of the principal events which should befall the church from that time to the end of the world. He was, therefore, a chosen vessel to contain this "good ointment," and to convey it, in all its purity and fragrance and strength, into the souls of others. No wonder that love, the love of God and of Christ, and love to God, to Christ, and the brethren, was a favourite topic with John, in his Gospel, in all his Epistles, and in this book which shuts up and seals the vision and the prophecy. Not that in this book or elsewhere he dwells on the personal marks of affection with which he was honoured, or imparts the secrets which were whispered into his ear in familiar conversation with his Lord. No ; he was ready to join with his brethren in saying, "Yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." What he had seen and heard and handled of the Word of life he declares unto us, that our fellowship may be with him ; and here he speaks of that love, and those proofs of it, which were common to him with all believers.

In the preceding context we have a preface and a salutation. The preface relates to the whole book. The salutation is addressed immediately to the seven churches of Asia, to whom he sent the letters dictated by the Son of God who appeared to him in glory. In its matter it agrees with the ordinary salutations of the inspired writers, being a prayer for "grace and peace" to them ; but its description of the object of the prayer is borrowed from the visions with which John was favoured. Instead of begging the blessing of grace and peace from the Father, Son, and Spirit, he implores it "from Him which was, and which is, and which is to come" (that is, the Father), "and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne" (that is, the Holy Ghost in the diversity and plenitude of his divine influences), "and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful Witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth." He departs from the order usually observed by the sacred writers, and mentions the Son last, because he meant to dwell on his blessed name, and to prepare the mind for the vision which he was about to relate. Accordingly, he immediately breaks out in this fervent doxology, or ascription of praise, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father ; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever ! Amen."

The redemption of sinners originated in the free and sovereign love of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whose love is one, though exerted variously, according to the order of their subsistence, in the voluntarily established economy of grace. The love of the Father has been justly called "the eternal disposing cause of redemp-

tion," and to it accordingly is ascribed in Scripture the purpose of saving sinners, the selection of the objects of mercy, the appointment of the means, and the predestinating of the elect, in the Mediator, to the enjoyment of eternal life. The love of the Son is the eternal spring of all that God did in the impetration of redemption; as the love of the Spirit is the spring of its application. And in the manifestation of the love of Christ we see also that of the Father and of the Spirit. While we are warranted to take a distinct view of divine love as displayed by each person of the adorable Trinity, we can thus view it as the love of one glorious being. We do not detract from the love of the Father and Spirit when we say, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood—be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

Christ is God, and "God is love." Divine love, however, could not have been known but for its effects, which manifest its reality and magnitude. It would have remained hid in God, and have been exerted only in those immanent acts of mutual complacency and delight between the Father and Son by the Spirit, of which we have some faint discoveries in the method of redemption, though veiled in "light inaccessible and full of glory." But how gloriously has the love of the Son of God shone forth, and manifested itself through his incarnation! Who were the objects of it? The sinful, the vile, and degraded. Those that were lying in guiltiness and defilement. And how did he save them from their sins? Not by an act of mere grace and power, but by giving his life a ransom for them. Not by blotting out their sins in his mercy, as the sun blots out a cloud by the strength of his rays, but by "washing them from their sins in his own blood," which he shed for this purpose. And not contented with redeeming them from all iniquity, and restoring them to favour and happiness, he hath raised them to the highest dignity and honour—hath made them "kings and priests unto God and his Father"—consecrated them as priests and crowned them as kings, making them partakers of the glory which he himself inherits, while he sits as "a priest upon his throne"—at once ministering to God and reigning with God. These are the fruits of the love of Christ—they are the love of Christ unfolded, realised, and perfected. His love is the golden thread, which, running through all that he hath done, and all that he hath procured, binds believers to him in love and gratitude. He might have done all this merely in obedience to his Father's will, with a view to his own honour, or in despite of Satan; but the Scripture everywhere assures us that he did it also from love to sinners.

To the contemplation of this love, as developed in the purchase of redemption, we propose confining ourselves at present, without entering upon the effects ascribed to it, further than may be necessary for the purpose of illustration.

In discoursing on this subject we propose, first, to speak of the mani-

festation of the love of Christ ; and, secondly, to make some observations illustrative of its nature and properties. And all with a view to our practical improvement of the subject, in the prospect of the ordinance in which we are this day to celebrate it.

I. With respect to the manifestation of the love of Christ, we may remark, in general, that love was the spring of all his mediatory acts. No doubt, he chiefly sought the glory of his Father, and testified his love to him by fulfilling his will. But in prosecuting these objects he was gratifying his own love. "I and my Father are one"—one in nature, one in will, one in love. And so far as we are concerned, we can find no other motive for his conduct than pure, rich, and overflowing benevolence. What "the spirit of the living creature" was in the wheels of Ezekiel's vision, that was the love of Christ in the work of redemption,—it actuated, impelled, and directed all his motions. It was love that brought him into the manger ; that conducted him to the temple at twelve years of age ; that presented him before John at Jordan ; that led him into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil ; that carried him up and down Judea teaching and healing ; that constrained him to go up to Jerusalem at the last passover ; that drew him to Gethsemane and Golgotha ; and that laid him in the grave. More particularly,

1. It was love that induced the Son of God to undertake our cause in the counsels of eternity. Thither must our thoughts ascend, to discover the first outgoings of this wonderful love, which, like those of its subject, "were from old, even from everlasting." The fall of man did not surprise the Almighty, or render it necessary for him to have recourse to new counsels. He had foreseen the apostasy of Adam, with the consequent ruin of his whole race, and had determined how to act on the emergency. The human family might have been allowed to perish, as they deserved, without any reflection on divine justice, and without any disparagement to that divine goodness, which had created them happy, and placed them in a situation the most favourable for securing and perpetuating their happiness. Still they were recoverable by that wisdom, mercy, and power, to which nothing is impossible ; and their recovery, though not necessary to the vindication of divine goodness, held forth an occasion for illustrating it, in the exercise of boundless grace and compassion. To permit the whole race of mankind to perish, in consequence of their representative having been seduced, when a large portion of the angelical order were mercifully preserved from seduction, did not seem good to that Being who is love. Hence the purpose which God purposed in himself to recover a number of the fallen family on earth, and to reunite them to the preserved family in heaven, and so to fill up the ranks which had been thinned by the rebellion of those exalted but proud spirits who kept not their first estate. But how shall this be accomplished, so as to vindicate the honour of the divine government, and to stamp reprobation on that

revolt which, after having been put down in heaven by exemplary punishment, hath now broken out upon earth? How shall the mighty breach be repaired? How shall an honourable peace be made? "Whom shall I send? and who will go for us?" "Here am I," said the Son of God; "send me. I undertake the task, and will see to the execution."—"Thou shalt go and prevail, thou shalt destroy the works of the devil, by finishing transgression, making an end of sin, and bringing in an everlasting righteousness; and therefore thou shalt be extolled, and exalted, and made very high." Thus the council of peace was between them both, and the everlasting covenant was ratified. We must speak in the language of time, when the question is of that which was before time began its course, always protesting that we speak as men; and in this the Spirit of God hath set us an example. Thus he who was manifest in these last times for us, that he might shed his blood as a lamb without blemish and without spot, was "verily fore-ordained before the foundation of the world." Thus, "in the purpose of God, grace was given us in Christ Jesus," and "eternal life was promised before the world began."¹

Well may Christ say to his redeemed, "Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love." In his omniscience, he saw them lying in their blood, without an eye to pity, or a hand to help; and he voluntarily undertook their deliverance, and prevented them with his mercy. Viewed as miserable, they were the objects of his compassion; and viewed as recoverable, he felt a willingness and readiness to save them, independently of any engagement which he came under, or of any appointment which he received from his Father.

2. The love of Christ appears in the delight he took in the prospect of the work, arduous and grievous as it was, which he had engaged to perform. True, there is nothing difficult, nothing grievous to the divine nature. But then it was necessary for him to assume an inferior nature, in which he should be humbled and suffer. "It became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Yet in the prospect of this, he expresses the highest satisfaction and desire. Why? Because in that way he would have an opportunity of bringing a revenue of glory to his Father, and securing a treasure of happiness to lost men; or, in other words, of evincing his love to his Father, and to the objects of his gracious choice. This is described most graphically in the eighth chapter of Proverbs. "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his ways, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." The Son of God was naturally and necessarily the object of his Father's love and complacency, as of the same essence, and possessing the same perfections with himself; but in these words he speaks of himself as "set up," that is, ordained or appointed. As the appointed Mediator, and lying

¹ 2 Tim. i. 9; Tit. i. 2.

under an engagement to become incarnate, there was a mutual complacency between him and his Father. "I was by him, as one brought up with him, and I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him." Though perfectly blessed as "the only begotten in the bosom of the Father," he looked forward with unspeakable satisfaction to the accomplishment of his work of grace and mercy in time: "Rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men." O blessed Saviour, didst thou thus think of me, in the midst of that glory which thou hadst with thy Father before the world was! Before I had a being, "before the earth was made, or the fields, or the highest part of the dust of the world!"

The period which elapsed from the fall of man to the fulness of the time fixed in the decree of heaven, was a period of love deferred, during which the Son of God, by personal appearances, by promises, by types and prophecies, and, though last not least, by the faith, hope, and desire which he produced in the hearts of the Old Testament saints, gave intimations of his gracious design, and made preparations for the accomplishment of his eternal undertaking. It was his Spirit who spake by the prophets, while they testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. And as the time of the pregnant promise drew nigh, his voice was more distinctly heard: "Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the Lord;—and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day."¹ "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of hosts."²

3. His love appears in the assumption of our nature. When the time arrived, he rent the heavens and came down on the wings of love; the everlasting mountains were scattered before him, the perpetual hills did bow. "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God," was his language when he put on that body which his Father had prepared for him, and in which he was to fulfil his eternal engagement. As God, he was incapable either of obeying or suffering. For this end it behoved him, not only to assume an inferior nature, but to become man, that so the law might be fulfilled, and all its demands satisfied, in that nature which had sinned. He took our nature upon him with all its sinless, but sin-like infirmities, and appeared in a state of weakness and abasement and subjection and dependence. This is what the apostle describes in such striking language, when pressing Christians to the exercise of love and humility: "Let the same mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself." O what a stoop was

¹ Zech. ii. 10; iii. 9.

² Mal. iii. 1.

there! This was humiliation indeed! There is nothing like it—nothing to which it can be compared. A king coming down from his throne, baring his royal head, exchanging his robes for the tattered garments of a beggar, and embracing a dunghill! What is that to Him who was in the form of God, taking upon him the form of a servant; to him who was equal with God, making himself of no reputation, “a worm, and no man;” leaving his Father’s bosom to lie in the womb of a mean woman, and exchanging the throne in heaven for a manger, a cross, and a grave on earth? This is the mystery of mysteries. Angels looked into it with holy wonder, and needed to be roused from their amazement to worship the incarnate God; devils were thrown into perplexity, and trembled, when constrained to believe that this was the Son of God; none of the princes of this world knew it, else they would not have sought the young child to destroy him, nor have crucified the Lord of glory.

But there is something beyond all this—something which is calculated to excite a higher feeling than wonder and astonishment. It is not the depth of the descent, it is not the contrast between the original greatness of the person and the meanness of the state into which he came, it is not even the effects which it produced, glorious and blessed as they are, which should chiefly fix our attention and engage our faith; but it is the cause from which all this proceeded. It was the love, the great love, wherewith he loved us, which induced, which impelled the incarnation. There was more in it than condescension. Love turned this cloud into a pillar of fire, from which a voice, similar to that which addressed Moses from the burning bush, was to be heard, saying, “I have seen, I have seen the affliction of my people, and am come down to deliver them.”

God is love; Christ is the incarnation of love. In him the love of God dwells bodily; it is brought down to earth, down to our conceptions and our feelings,—love which can be seen, and heard, and handled. Now those ancient descriptions, which formerly were figurative, are true in the very letter: “In all their afflictions he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them; in his love and in his pity he bare them and carried them.” Now the desire and prayer of the church is granted, “Oh that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother!”¹ “For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.”²

4. The love of the Redeemer appears in the whole of his obedience unto death. To this were all the actings of his love directed. To this he engaged in the eternal counsel. To this he looked forward with desire and delight. To this end was he born, and for this end did he come into the world, “not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.”

¹ Cant. viii. 1.

² Heb. ii. 11.

He went through an arduous course of sinless, unceasing, universal, and perfect obedience to the precept of the law, as a servant fulfilling all righteousness, in a state of deep humiliation and manifold temptation. And yet all appeared as nothing to him, for the love which he bare to those whom he came to save.

He bore the penal sanction of the broken law as well as obeyed its precepts. And how great were his sufferings, both of body and mind ! He suffered in all ways—by hunger, and thirst, and weariness, by contradiction, and reproach, and ingratitude ; and he terminated a life of sorrows by a painful, ignominious, and accursed death. He suffered from all quarters—from earth and hell and heaven—but especially from the hand of his own Father as a righteous judge, inflicting upon him the punishment due to those in whose room he stood, and whose sins he bore. The hiding of his Father's countenance, and a deep sense of his righteous but awful indignation, were the wormwood and the gall in his cup of suffering, which wrung from him those bitter cries, heard in the garden and from the cross : “ My soul is exceeding sorrowful ; and what shall I say ? Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me ? ” He was made a curse for us, fell a victim to divine justice, and had his blood shed as a sacrifice on the altar of an offended Deity. The Scripture everywhere celebrates this as the grand proof and effect of his love. “ The Son of God loved me, and gave himself for me.” “ Having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.” “ Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins IN HIS OWN BLOOD, be glory and dominion for ever ! Amen.”

II. Having taken this view of the manifestation of Christ's love, I shall make a few remarks for illustrating its nature and properties.

1. It is the love of a divine person. The love of the Son in undertaking the work of redemption, in coming into the world and in laying down his life, was of the same kind with that of the Father in appointing him to be the Saviour, sending him into the world, and delivering him up to the death. Of both it is true that “ God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” And the love of the Son is expressly called the love of God : “ Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.”¹ But this leads me to observe that—

2. It is the love of a divine person in human nature. The body which was prepared for him was animated, not by his divine nature, but by a human soul, and in this body he was to make his love effectual by means of all the inward affections, as well as external actions which were peculiar and proper to it. His human nature was furnished immeasurably with all grace, and especially with love, pity, and compassion to fallen and lost men. There was a universal love or benevolence

¹ 1 John, iii. 16.

exerted in doing good to all within his reach, and in loving and forgiving his enemies, which was the soul of his obedience, and the fulfilling of the law. But there was also in his human soul a peculiar love to those who were given him by the Father, which exerted itself in strong, fervent, and irrepressible desires for their salvation, and which urged him on, and gave him no rest, until he had completed it by "giving himself an offering and a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour to God." "I have a baptism to be baptised with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished." "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer."¹ So strong did the manifestations of this desire become as the hour of its consummation approached, that the disciples, and especially those that were with him in the garden, might have said, in the language of Naomi, "The man will not be in rest until he have finished the thing this day."² Now, in meditating on the love of Christ, we are not to confine our thoughts to the eternal actings of his divine nature (for all the acts of his love, as God, must be eternal), but are to take into view also its temporal acting in the human nature. In undertaking our cause from everlasting, and in becoming man, the love of the divine nature only was displayed; but subsequently to the incarnation there was a concurrence of the two natures in the expression of love; and though the acts of love in these two natures were infinitely distinct, yet, in virtue of the hypostatical union, they were acts of one and the same person. If the bodily actions of Christ were the acts of his divine person, surely his mental acts were so also; if the act of laying down his life, so also the cheerfulness and delight with which he made the sacrifice, from regard to his Father's glory, and from love to sinners. "God purchased the church with his own blood."³

3. The love of Christ is transcendently great. Many examples of disinterested love have been exhibited among mankind, degenerate as they are, which have called forth the admiration and gratitude of their fellow-creatures. Friends have devoted themselves for their friends, patriots for their country, and martyrs for their God and Redeemer. But the love of Christ exceeds unspeakably that of friends, and patriots, and martyrs. It passes understanding, it exceeds all ordinary belief. It is incredible to all but those who have been taught from above. Even saints require to be "strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inner man," before they are "able to comprehend what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." It is but a little that we can now say of it, and O how poor and unworthy of the theme is that little!

In the first place, consider whose love it is. John had described him as the "faithful Witness, the first-begotten of the dead, and the Prince of the kings of the earth;" and we find Christ afterwards saying of himself, "I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last." The favour or love of an earthly king is highly prized. But he who loved us is

¹ Luke, xii. 50; xxii. 15.² Ruth, iii. 18.³ Acts, xx. 28.

fairer than the children of men, and hath a more excellent name than the angels. He is "the blessed and the only potentate, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords,—the King eternal, immortal, and invisible." "By him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers : all things were created by him, and for him : and he is before all things, and by him all things consist."¹ And his love is like himself, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable.

In the second place, consider who were the objects of this love. Not creatures of an exalted order, like the angels,—cherubim and seraphim, who were made pure and fervent as a flame to surround the throne of the Eternal. He passed by the angels, and set his love on the sons of Adam, beings of a far inferior grade, and partly allied to the beasts that perish. Lord, what is man, that thou art mindful of him ; and the son of man, that thou visitest him ? Dost thou open thine eyes on such a one ? and deignest, from the height of thy sanctuary in heaven, to cast a glance upon him ? But this is a small matter. The objects of his love were fallen and ruined, sinful and self-destroyed. And this unveils other properties of Christ's love, still more wonderful than those which we have mentioned. It was sovereignly free, and independent, and preventing. It is no wonder to find God taking pleasure in his holy angels, and rejoicing over them to do them good. He cannot but love his own image, and bountifully reward those who have always served him, without ever transgressing his commands. To such it is natural for him to say, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine."² But he foresaw nothing amiable about his chosen objects, except what should be the fruit of his love, and the effect of his gracious operation. On the contrary, they presented everything that was obnoxious and offensive. Theirs was the image of the devil ; they were the children of disobedience and of wrath. Read the beginning of the second chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and then mark what follows : "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ—by grace are ye saved." The love of creatures is founded either on some favour received, or, when most disinterested, on some good quality or excellency, real or supposed. Not so the love of God and his Son. "Christ died for the ungodly." "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die ; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love towards us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."

The love of Christ is enhanced by the consideration that the wretchedness of its objects was as loathsome as it was deplorable. Who ever heard of a prince selecting as a spouse one who was at once diseased and deformed, drowned in debt, "wretched and miserable, and poor and blind and naked ?" Yet this did the Son of God for you, Christian. You have a very just, though figurative, description of your natural

¹ Colossians, i. 16, 17.

² Luke, xv. 31.

condition in the prophecies of Ezekiel.¹ "Thou wast cast out into the open field, to the loathing of thy own person, in the day that thou wast born." We can scarcely conceive a state of greater distress than that of a new-born infant, deserted by its unnatural parents, and exposed in the open fields, without having one of those services performed to it which nature requires. Yet such a case is not desperate; some benevolent passenger may commiserate the helpless outcast. Such, however, was not your condition. "No eye," says Christ, "pitied thee, to do any of these things to thee." Thy state was too repulsive to excite ordinary compassion; and thou must have inevitably and speedily perished. But, says he, "when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thy blood, I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live; and behold thy time was a time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee: yea, I swear unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine." "Is this the manner of men, O Lord?"

In the third place, apply what has been already said as to the ways in which he has manifested his love,—how unparalleled is it in this respect! In undertaking the desperate cause of his people, condescending to unite himself with them by assuming their degraded nature, and in it performing such hard service, and laying down his precious life for them! No creature ever made such sacrifices, for none ever had so much to sacrifice. None ever stood so high, and none could have stooped so low. And to these we might have added the proofs of his love which he is still giving and will continue to give to his church, were it not that we confine ourselves to what relates to the purchase of redemption.

Lastly, add to all this the precious and inestimable blessings which he has purchased for them. In general, he obtained eternal redemption for them. He hath procured, by his obedience and death, the forgiveness of all their sins—reconciliation to God and restoration to his favour—holiness—adoption, with all the rights and privileges of the sons of God, enlarged and enhanced and heightened by their union with him who is the only-begotten Son of God and the heir of all things, so that they are made heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. And who can conceive what is included in these prerogatives? "Eye hath not seen, neither hath ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what God hath prepared for them." They shall inherit all things.

III. Let us attend to the practical improvement of this subject.

1. We may see one proof of the deep depravity of mankind. This is to be found in the reception which the Gospel and the Saviour whom it reveals meets with from the world. The Gospel contains a revelation of the love of God, not only by word but by deed. "Herein is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." But he is neglected, despised, rejected, blas-

¹ Ezek. xvi. 5—8.

phemed. Men speak great things in praise of charity, or love. Believe them, and you would think that if it were to appear in a bodily shape on the earth, all the world would fall down and worship the heavenly visitant. Charity did make its appearance on the earth in all its celestial attractions. It dwelt among men in the person of Jesus Christ ; it went about proclaiming peace, breathing good-will, and performing works of mercy. And what was the reception which it met with ? Instead of worshipping, they crucified it. But this was not the worst. By an amazing display of divine wisdom and mercy, that death which, as inflicted by men, was the greatest crime ever committed under the sun, proved the expiation of sin ; Christ was raised from the dead, and repentance and the remission of sins were, by the commandment of the everlasting God, preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And what was the consequence of this ? Why, that the Saviour should be crucified afresh by the unbelief, impenitence, and ungodliness of the greater part of those to whom he was proclaimed with all the demonstration of his matchless love ! And this is still the treatment which Christ receives in his word. His salvation is neglected, the report of his sufferings is heard as an antiquated tale, and his love is slighted and contemned. This is ingratitude of the darkest hue ; and there is not a surer mark of depravity than ingratitude. Woe to the world called Christian, because of this ingratitude ! There is no such sin among heathens. The devils are not chargeable with it. They were guilty of deep ingratitude to the Being who placed them in such an exalted rank ; but they never poured contempt on the love of a Saviour. They instigated the death of Christ, but they believed that he was come to torment them before the time.

2. Here is food for faith. "We have known and believed the love that God hath to us," says John ; "God is love." If you would know the love of God, you must believe it. There is no other way of becoming acquainted with it. This is "the hidden manna." Sense cannot perceive it ; reason cannot discover it ; man cannot teach it. "Unto you which believe, he is precious." "Whom having not seen, ye love ; in whom, though now you see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." Without faith we cannot receive or feed on any of the truths of the Gospel ; and provided we have true and saving faith, the love of Christ will, in some degree, be apprehended and appropriated. The all-sufficiency and suitableness of Christ as a Saviour, his ability and willingness to save all that come to him, with the warrant which all have to do so, are the first things which call the attention and engage the faith of a convinced sinner. But he cannot rest there ; he rises, with a heavenly instinct, from the stream to the spring. "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." And why did he come on this errand ? From love, mere love, is the answer. If the fact be true, and the report worthy of all

acceptation, is not the love, which was the impulsive cause of the whole, worthy of our faith also? Yes; "the Son of God loved me, and gave himself for me." And who art thou that speakest so boldly, and appropriatest so confidently? "I am less than the least of all saints—the chief of sinners—for I was a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy"—and why not *me* also?

3. Let us see the reasonableness and the duty of love to Christ. What is the first and main thing we owe "to him that loved us," and loved us at such expense? A child can answer, Love. Nature, under the influence of the common feelings of mankind, cries out against those who do not requite love for love. "For sinners also love those that love them." Those who profess to believe the great doctrines of the Gospel, and feel no gratitude and affection to the Saviour, "have denied the faith, and are worse than an infidel." Pagans and profane godless men will rise up in the judgment and condemn such Christians. "Love," says one, "is that jewel of human nature which commands a valuation wherever it is found." Though a person be far beneath us, though we have little or no need of his good offices, though he has it not in his power to confer any benefit upon us, though he fail entirely in his endeavours to serve us, yet if his love be real, sincere, and constant, and is evinced to be so by his exertions, it commands our respect and esteem, and we feel our hearts instinctively making some return in kind, if they are not utterly debased by habits of depravity. But if the person be of a superior rank, if he possess personal excellences, if his love to us has exposed him to great inconveniences and charges, and if it has procured for us and ours the most substantial and precious benefits, the whole world would cry shame upon us, if we did not evince a reciprocal affection. Need I say that all these enhancements are to be found in the love of Christ, to such a degree and height as is unparalleled in the whole creation?

The genuineness of our love to Christ is proved by the obedience which we yield to his will, according to his own saying, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." But the keeping of the commandments of Christ is one thing, and love to Christ is another. The latter is the spring and principle from which the former proceeds. Those are not to be listened to who would represent obedience as all the return which Christ expects, and who would set aside or decry all feelings of the heart towards the person of the Saviour. If there is any truth in the Gospel, if there is any reality in what it says of the love felt and shown by Christ, then love to his person forms an essential part of genuine Christianity. He is not a Christian, he knows nothing of the power of the Gospel, he knows nothing of the grace of God in truth, he does not believe one article of the Christian faith aright, who does not perceive and feel the love of Christ pervading the whole with its sweet and attractive and heart-penetrating odour; and he is not sensible of the love of Christ, nor values it, whose affections are not drawn out to him.

“Because of the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth ; therefore do the virgins love thee. Draw us ; we will run after thee. The king hath brought me into his chambers : we will remember thy love more than wine : the upright love thee.” “We love him, because he first loved us.” It is the grief of the heart of every true believer, that he loves the Saviour so little ; and he is ashamed, as well as grieved, that there is such a disparity and distance between—not the love of Christ, for that is infinite—but between his knowledge of the love of Christ and the returns which he makes to it. They turn the Gospel, and indeed all religion, into a skeleton,—they squeeze from it the very marrow and life’s-blood, who exclude from it love to God, and who discountenance and discourage, under the name of enthusiasm, the most intense and fervent affection to the person of Christ, arising from a persuasion and sense of his love. “I had rather,” says a writer, whose warm piety was balanced by the soundness of his judgment and his deep insight into the mystery of the Gospel—“I had rather choose my eternal lot and portion with the meanest believer, who, sensible of the love of Christ, spends his days in mourning that he can love him no more than he finds himself able, in his utmost endeavours for the discharge of his duty, to do,—than with the best of them whose vain speculations, and a false pretence of reason, puff them up into a contempt of these things.”

Live, my brethren, in the believing contemplation of this love. It is not by a single act of faith, nor by occasional acts, but by a life of faith, that our love to Christ can be strengthened, and become the habitual and constraining principle of our obedience. “The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” “Keep yourselves in the love of God.” And beware of a carnal, sensual frame of mind, which is incompatible with it. The mind must be fitted and prepared for such contemplations, by rising above the gross conceptions of sense, as well as the grovelling lusts and malignant passions of sin. Let your whole souls be given to the meditation of the love of Christ, and in coming forward to his table, let the heart of every one accord with the grateful and adoring ascription : “Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood—to him be glory and dominion, for ever and ever !—Amen.”

SERMON IX.

THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST.

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."—
HEB. iv. 15.

THE salvation which the Gospel reveals is equally adapted to all mankind. There is not one Gospel to the Jew, and another to the heathen—one doctrine of salvation for the devout and sober, and another for the profane and profligate. As all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, so the same Lord is rich unto all that call on him, justifying them freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, and saving them by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost. But while the apostles of Christ preached everywhere and to all the same Gospel, they varied occasionally, "according to the wisdom given to them," the motives by which they urged the reception of the truth, and steadfastness in adhering to it when received.

The principal motive to steadfastness in the Gospel is the great salvation which it makes known, and this is common to all Christians. Yet we may observe a difference in the exhortations to this duty which the apostles addressed to Gentile and Jewish believers. In addressing the former, they reminded them of the gross ignorance and idolatry in which they had at one time been plunged, and from which they were recovered by the sudden shining of the true light on their minds. In dealing with the Jews, again, they insisted much on the great improvement which the Gospel had made on their former privileges. They possessed all they had enjoyed under the law, or first covenant, and much more. In point of revelation, they had, in addition to Moses and the prophets, Christ as the Apostle of their profession, that great Prophet whom God had promised to the fathers that he would raise up to declare his will more perfectly. Under the former dispensation, they had sacrifices by which they were allowed to draw near to God; but now they had that sacrifice which, once offered, had for ever put away sin, and in the faith of which they might serve God acceptably all the days of their life. Formerly, they had a priesthood divinely appointed to serve at the altar,

and particularly a high priest, who once a-year went into the holy of holies with the blood of atonement, and stood before the mercy-seat as the representative of the congregation; but now they had a high priest, greater than all the priests under the law. This is the argument by which the apostle urges constancy in the Christian faith on the believing Hebrews in the verse preceding the text. "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." The high priest under the law was a mere man of like passions and subject to sin as his brethren: our high priest is "Jesus the Son of God," a person of infinite dignity and spotless purity. The Jewish high priest passed through the veil into an inner apartment of a material and earthly sanctuary: the Christian high priest "is passed into the *heavens*," there to appear continually before God for us. The dignity of his person, and the exalted place which he occupies, reflect the highest honour on our profession; they secure to us the highest privileges, and therefore the consideration of them ought to animate us in adhering to him, and fortify our minds against apostasy.

But then, the very things which constitute the pre-eminence of their high priest, and which are necessary to the perfection of his office, may also operate as a discouragement on the minds of Christians. If he is so great and exalted, and so far removed from us in place (they will be ready to say), how can we suppose that he will interest himself in our affairs, or that he will look down from the height of his glorious throne in the heavens upon those who dwell on earth, and are compassed about with manifold infirmities? Against such discouraging fears or doubts, the words of our text furnish an antidote and remedy: "For," says the apostle, "we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities." Though he be great, he is also condescending; though he be exalted, he is also compassionate and sympathising; though he be as far removed from us, in his human nature, as heaven from earth, yet is he connected with us by a real though invisible tie, which draws down his regard upon us, and prevents him from forgetting us for a single moment—this is sacred, tender, and strong sympathy. He not only loves his people with a divine love, but bears to them the affection of a brother, "bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh;" feels for them, not merely with the active benevolence of a perfectly good man, but also with the impassioned feeling of "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief"—of one who knows what it is to suffer, from his own experience—who "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Under his greatest sufferings and temptations he never sinned, as we are all apt to do; but this is the single point of disparity; in all other points the resemblance holds between him and his brethren. There is not an infirmity, or pain, or grief which they bear, that he did not bear before them; and in consequence of this he is capable of feeling for and along with them. By the "infirmities" of

Christians we are to understand everything, including their sufferings, which has a tendency to make them faint in their Christian profession. And when it is said, "we have not an high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities," the negative form of expression is to be understood as having the force of a strong affirmation. Though we have a great High Priest who is passed into the heavens, let us not suppose for a moment that he is such a one as cannot be touched—he is tenderly, powerfully touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities: He *sympathises* with us, as the words literally read.

The text teaches us that one of the distinguishing qualifications of Christ as our High Priest, is the sympathy or compassion which he feels for the infirmities of his followers, in consequence of his having passed through the trials to which they are liable, with this single difference, that he sinned in none of them. Let us, in the *first* place, explain this sympathy of our great High Priest; and, in the *second* place, state some of those points in which he was tempted like as we are, and is therefore qualified for sympathising with us.

I. The principal work of Christ as our High Priest was to make reconciliation or atonement for our sins. For this purpose he assumed our nature, and through the Eternal Spirit offered himself without spot unto God. This was typified by the sacrifices under the law, the offering of which formed the great employment of the Levitical priesthood. And without this we could have derived no comfort from the intercession and compassion of Christ. But it behoved him to be not merely a proper, but also a merciful high priest. Sinners needed not only to be saved from their sins by his blood, but to be relieved, favoured, and comforted by his grace. They needed a Saviour who would not only undertake for them, and be able to perform what he had undertaken, but also would do all his work with condescension, tenderness, and pity. They required to be "saved" and "pulled out of the fire" with "compassion."¹ They were destined, after being redeemed, and before coming to a state of final safety in heaven, to travel through the wilderness of this world, subjected to various trials, hardships, and temptations; and accordingly it was necessary that they should be placed under a leader who, being made perfect through suffering, would treat them with all the care and tenderness which flow from sympathy. Such is the fine description given of the divine care about the children of Israel, after they were brought out of Egypt, and during their peregrination in the wilderness: "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and in his pity he redeemed them: and he bare them and carried them all the days of old."² And again it is said in brief and summary narrative, "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel."³ As applied to God, these and similar expressions are used according to that strong figure of speech

¹ Jude, v. 22, 23.² Isa. lxiii. 9.³ Judg. x. 16.

called *anthropopathy*, by which he is described as feeling after the manner of men. Properly speaking, there can be no such feeling in the divine mind as sympathy, or suffering with the miserable: when ascribed to God, it can only mean his knowledge of their misery, with his will or determination to relieve them. But in Christ there is literal sympathy; and herein does the grace and wisdom of God appear, that he has provided us with a high priest, who not only knows our miseries, but is touched with the feeling of them.

1. The sympathy of Christ is both natural and moral. It is a law of our nature, and a striking proof of the wisdom and goodness of our Creator, that when we see our fellow-creatures in distress, we are irresistibly affected with a feeling similar to theirs, which excites us to interest ourselves in their behalf, and to do all in our power for their relief. When they exhibit symptoms of suffering pain, the pang goes to our heart; when they weep, the tear starts into our eye; and we cannot find relief but in the way of relieving them. We sympathise, that is, we suffer with them. The foundation of this lies in our participation of a common nature; the proximate and immediate cause of it is the revival of those feelings which we ourselves had experienced on the same or similar occasions. The feeling is partly natural and involuntary, but it is connected with the moral and benevolent affections. We may repress, or we may cherish it. Hence we read of persons who "shut up the bowels of their compassion," and of others who take compassion. Hence also it is commanded as matter of duty, "Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep." "Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body."¹

Now the sympathy of our Lord partakes of both of these qualities. His holy soul is full of good-will, benignity, tenderness and mercy, disposing him to relieve and comfort those that are in distress. This was the effect of the immaculate purity of his human nature, and of that abundance of grace which was poured into it by virtue of its union with the person of the Son of God, and its unction by the Holy Spirit without measure. But then this disposition is excited by that fellow-feeling which arises from his having been himself a sufferer. And this is one of the reasons on account of which he assumed our nature with all its sinless infirmities, and still continues to wear it with all its essential affections and feelings: "In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren; for in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."² He had the heart of a man, all the affections of a man, and that in the highest state of sensibility and tenderness. Whatever a human soul can suffer under grief, sorrow, shame, fear, disappointment, regret,—he felt it all. We are apt to think, that because he was in the form of God, this, or the consciousness of it, must have borne off from his spirit, or counterbalanced the

¹ Rom. xii. 15; Heb. xiii. 3.

² Heb. iv. 17, 18.

afflictions which he met with, so as that he felt little trouble from them. The language of Scripture about these, and the manner in which he expressed his own feelings, testify that this is a great mistake. So far as his sufferings were purely penal, he shunned them not, he shielded not himself from them. He bared his breast to the shafts of affliction, and allowed its bitterness and gall to soak into the inmost parts of his soul. He gave many proofs of his sympathy with those who laboured under distress both bodily and mental. "When he saw Mary weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her," he was troubled, groaned in spirit, and wept; "and again groaning in himself, he cometh to the grave of Lazarus."¹ He "was moved with compassion on the multitudes when he saw that they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."² And when he beheld the city of Jerusalem, we are informed that "he wept over it."³ His feelings on that occasion were those of deep regret, of disappointed benevolence, of tender commiseration, of pungent distress for the doom which that obdurate people had drawn down on their own heads; feelings which could be expressed in no language but his own mysterious and melting strains of sorrow: "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes." On another occasion, while he could not forbear to denounce the sin, he gave full vent to his compassion for the sufferers. "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!"⁴

2. The sympathy of Christ is not the less perfect, nor does it yield the less comfort to us, that he was "without sin" in all his sufferings and temptations. He was "tempted like as we are, yet without sin." In the following chapter,⁵ the apostle mentions that every high priest taken from among men "can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity." And that he refers here to moral infirmity, or proneness to sin, appears from the next verse, in which he says, "by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins." But we must not infer from this that our Lord wanted any motive or incentive to compassion which they possessed. So far was this from being the apostle's conclusion, that he afterwards shows that, in this respect, Christ was superior to the legal priests: "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins."⁶ No doubt the consciousness of their own moral infirmity, or liability to sin, would make the priests under the law, and should make the ministers of the Gospel still, tender in their dealings

¹ John, xi. 33—38.² Mat. ix. 36.³ Luke, xix. 41.⁴ Luke, xiii. 34.⁵ Heb. v. 2.⁶ Heb. vii. 26, 27.

with fellow-sinners,—“considering themselves, lest they also be tempted.”¹ But whatever use is to be made of it in this way, yet sin dwelling in any man is in itself an evil, and in proportion as it prevails, instead of helping, hurts the exercise of compassion, as well as of every other good disposition, rendering him less qualified for discharging his duties to others. From this sinful infirmity our Lord was perfectly free; yet being made sensible of its power over us, by his having felt all the natural infirmities which are connected with sin, and by which we are often drawn into its commission, he is perfectly qualified for sympathising, not indeed with the sin, but with the weakness which yields to the temptation. The subject requires to be treated with delicacy and caution; and therefore I shall explain my meaning by an example. In the wilderness, our Saviour was “an hungered.”² The tempter took occasion from this to solicit him to work a miracle for the mere purpose of relieving himself from the painful feeling. From this Christ knows the influence of the cravings of appetite in tempting his people to have recourse to unlawful methods of relief. As a person who successfully resists the violence which may be used by another to draw him off the king’s highway, knows the strength of the assailant better than one who yields with little or no resistance; so Christ knows the force of temptation which he uniformly resisted, better than we who easily comply with it.

3. His sympathy is not impaired in his glorified state, nor is its exercise incompatible with the felicity which he enjoys in heaven. It forms one of his official qualifications as our high priest, and as the office still continues, so must the qualification be permanent. Hence the numerous instances in which he gave proofs to his followers of his retaining the same nature in which he suffered. On appearing to them after his resurrection, when “they supposed that they had seen a spirit,” he would have them to satisfy themselves of his personal identity, and the sameness of his human nature, by appealing to the testimony of their senses. “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have.”³ When he left the world, the angels testified to the gazing disciples that “that same Jesus should so come in like manner as they had seen him go into heaven.”⁴ When he met with Paul on his way to Damascus, he announced himself as suffering in sympathy with his church on earth;—“I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.” When in the isle of Patmos he appeared to John in his glory, to comfort his awe-stricken disciple, and convince him that he was the same kind Master on whose breast he had reclined, he “laid his right hand upon him: saying, Fear not; I am he that liveth, and was dead.” His compassion is essentially the same that ever it was. A change doubtless has, to a certain degree, taken place on the mode of its exercise. Everything that was painful in it, as felt by him during the days of his flesh, is now removed. He no longer weeps or groans—for all tears are for ever wiped away from

¹ Gal. v. 1.² Mat. iv. 2.³ Luke, xxiv. 39.⁴ Acts, i. 11.

his eyes. But he still retains a lively recollection of all that he suffered on earth, and of the manner in which he was affected under it, which, acting on the essential feelings of humanity, prompts him to exert his boundless mercy and power in supporting, relieving, and comforting his afflicted people. This sympathy is inseparable from the nature which he still wears on the throne, and from the relation in which he stands to all his followers, and which no distance of place, no addition of glory, can dissolve or lessen. A friend will not feel the less for us that he is in a distant land, provided he is in the knowledge of our distress ; and we are as much assured of his sympathy by the affectionate letters which he sends us, as we could be by his words if he were with us. Jesus, the Son of God, is perfectly acquainted with our griefs and sorrows, and we are assured of the tender interest which he takes in them, from the immutability of his character, and from his own declarations, which, in the experience of his people, he seals from time to time by his Holy Spirit, the Comforter whom he hath sent to supply his place. Accordingly, the apostle, in the text, speaks, not of the sympathy which he showed during the time he was on earth, but of that which he feels and displays, since he “passed into the heavens.” “We have not an high priest which *cannot be* touched with the feeling of our infirmities.”

II. Let us consider some of those points in which he was tempted like as we are, and is therefore qualified for sympathising with us. The apostle does not merely say, in general, that he was tempted, but that he was “in all points tempted like as we are ;” plainly intimating that we may take comfort in our distresses, whatever they may be, from the consideration that our high priest was in the same or a similar situation.

1. The Lord Jesus is touched with the feeling of our bodily infirmities and pains. There is not a sinless infirmity cleaving to our mortal frame with which he is not experimentally acquainted ; nor is there a stage of life in which that infirmity is most felt which he may not be said to have passed through. “He grew up as a tender plant ;” he was a weak and helpless child, and increased in wisdom and stature. He can sympathise with those who are tender in years, and is still to be considered as saying, “Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.” And though he did not reach the years of old age, yet it would appear that his labours and griefs had brought its infirmities prematurely upon him. He knew what it was to serve his Father and minister to men, in a weak body, which sunk under fatigue, and was exhausted by long-continued labour. He experienced hunger and thirst and weariness. He had, therefore, compassion on the multitude when he saw that “they had nothing to eat,” and he wrought a miracle to feed them ; for, said he, “I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint by the way.”¹ When the three disciples, exhausted by

¹ Mat. xv. 32.

the fatigue of the preceding day, fell repeatedly asleep instead of watching with him in his agony, he, with the most tender sympathy, tempered his reproof and apologised for their conduct: "The spirit truly is willing, but the flesh is weak." And what severe bodily pain he endured, particularly at the close of his life, is well known. Take the short account of it in the prophetic language of the twenty-second Psalm, which is descriptive at once of great pain and extreme exhaustion: "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws." What comfort may Christians derive from these words when they are suffering in a similar way!

True it is that we do not read of his labouring under certain defects and diseases to which we are subject. But he is not on this account the less qualified for sympathising with his people under them. Our sympathy is founded on what we have suffered, but it is extended and increased by what we see in the sufferings of those with whom we have to do. Now who were the persons who surrounded him, whom he admitted into his presence, and whose distresses he made his own by examining and relieving them? Were they not the blind, the deaf, the dumb, the lame, the leprous, and persons afflicted with "all manner of sickness and all manner of disease?" And hence the Evangelist, after describing the cures he effected on such persons, represents it as a fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah, "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses."¹

2. Our Lord is touched with the feeling of the trials which we endure in our worldly circumstances. "God hath chosen the poor of this world." Christians have not only generally been among those who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow, but they have often been in straitened circumstances, and distressed with the apprehension of being reduced to absolute want and beggary. But here they have the sympathy of Him who had to complain, "I am poor and sorrowful."² None are more to be pitied than those who have been reduced from affluence to poverty and dependence. But this was the case with our high priest: "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor." In the early part of his life, he sustained himself by labouring at the trade of a carpenter, and during his public ministry he was supported by the contributions of his friends. And as this slender fund was intrusted to one who proved "a thief," we need not wonder that his supplies occasionally failed, and that he could not answer the demands that were made on him. This seems to have been the case when the tribute-money was asked from him at Capernaum, and when he wrought a miracle to discharge the claim—a thing which we never read of his doing, and which on one occasion he refused to do, to relieve his personal wants. Accordingly we are told that "when Peter was come

¹ Mat. viii. 16, 17.

² Psalms, lxxix. 29.

into the house, Jesus prevented him.”¹ The disciple was aware that the funds of his master were completely drained, and he did not know how to announce the demand made on him by the officer ; but Jesus kindly anticipated him by introducing the subject. And in a similar way does he still prevent the complaints and allay the apprehensions of his followers, by assuring them of his sympathy with them, and of the relief which is at hand, though it may be unseen. “Fear not, little flock ; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom ;” and will he suffer you to perish for want by the way ? “The earth is mine, and the fulness thereof. All things are put under my feet, all sheep and oxen, and the fish of the sea. Be not distressed about what ye shall eat or drink : your bread shall be given you, and your waters shall be sure.”

3. He is touched with the feeling of what we suffer in the distress and the loss of our relatives and friends. He wept and sobbed and groaned, along with Mary and Martha, at the death of their brother, to such a degree as to excite the surprise of the bystanders, who said, “Behold how he loved him !” It was foretold to his mother, at the time of his birth, that “a sword should pierce her soul,” and this was fulfilled when she saw the “holy child,” for whom she had magnified the Lord, and on whose account she expected that all generations should pronounce her blessed, delivered into the hands of sinners, and transfixed and bleeding on the cross. He knew the anguish which wrung her heart, and, touched with the same feeling, he said to the disciple whom he loved, “Behold thy mother,” and to her, “Behold thy son.” Think on this, ye who have been bereaved of dear relatives, and who refuse to be comforted. Did ever mother mourn such a son ? Did ever son feel such anguish for a mother ? Behold, and consider if there be any sorrow like unto his sorrow, and think how well qualified he is to sympathise with you in a similar situation.

“But this does not come near my case, nor meet my loss, of which he could have no experience.” I know what you mean, daughter of affliction ; but you are wrong in your apprehension. In the course of his journeyings, our Lord met a funeral. It was that of a young man, the only son of his mother, and she a widow. When Jesus saw her following the body in speechless agony, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And going forward he touched the bier, and the bearers, awe-struck, as if the father of the deceased had come to demand his child, stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead arose, and he delivered him to his mother.² O, the transport of delight which now made the heart of that widow to sing for joy ! But this is not the feeling to which I wish to direct your attention. No : it is the sympathy which produced it, and which still beats in the breast of Him who, regarding all his people with the affection of a “kinsman” as well as a Saviour, continues to say, “Leave thy

¹ Mat. xvii. 25.

² Luke, vii. 11—15.

fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me."¹

4. Our Lord is touched with the feeling of what his people suffer under persecution and reproach from their enemies. It has been the lot of his followers in some periods to suffer these in very aggravated inflictions. Their names have been cast out as evil, they have been traduced as the worst, and vilified as the basest of men,—they have been spoiled of their goods, deprived of their liberty, tortured and put to death in every form that ingenuity could devise or inhuman violence could inflict. And even in more peaceable times they are not altogether exempted from this species of suffering. "Yea, all that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution." But they may expect the sympathy of Him for whose sake they are thus treated. He incurred the hatred of the world, and met with its very worst treatment. He was reproached, misrepresented, insulted, derided, accused of the most flagitious crimes—gluttony, drunkenness, sabbath-breaking, sedition, blasphemy, and compact with the devil. He was arraigned, condemned, scourged, and put to an ignominious and accursed death. And all this treatment he received because he faithfully bore witness to the truth, glorified his Father, and went about doing good to men. "Consider him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds." Not an insult can be offered, not an injury done to the meanest of his followers, which he does not sensibly feel. He that toucheth them, toucheth the apple of his eye.

5. He sympathises with his people in the trials they meet with from friends. These are often the sharpest sufferings of Christians. They can bear the malice and abuse of open enemies; but oh! 'tis hard to endure the coldness, the ingratitude, undutifulness, infidelity, and irreligion of those who are intimately connected with them, and bound by many ties to act a very different part. "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then could I have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company."² But Christ suffered also from this quarter. When he began his public ministry, none opposed and discouraged him more than his fellow-citizens, and even his own brethren. Those that had seen his miracles and eaten his bread, lifted up the heel against him. Multitudes of those who had professed the greatest attachment to his person and mission, took offence and left him. How much was he grieved with the ignorance, unbelief, worldliness, and inconstancy of his chosen disciples! And when the hour of his greatest trial came, one of them betrayed him into the hands of his enemies;

¹ Jer. xlix. 11.

² Psalms, lv. 12, 13.

another denied him with oaths and curses ; and the rest forsook him and fled, so that he was left without a single earthly friend or comforter. Though this should be your situation, Christians, you need not be afraid to be left alone ;—you have the sympathy of one who is “a brother born for adversity”—“a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.”¹ “I will not leave you comfortless”—I know what it is to be deserted and left forlorn ; and “I will never,—no, never leave thee, nor forsake thee.”

6. Our Lord has a fellow-feeling with what his people suffer under temptation. All afflictions may be considered as temptations, because they try the faith and constancy of those who suffer them, and through their corruptions draw them into sin. In this sense, Christ calls the whole of his personal ministry a time of temptation, “Ye are they that have continued with me in my temptations ;” and the same name is given to the afflictions of Christians, “No temptation hath taken you but such as is common to man.” But besides these trials, there are seasons in which they are more directly tempted by the solicitations which their spiritual adversary, availing himself of the circumstances in which they are placed, addresses to their souls, and by which he endeavours to entice them to the commission of sin, to the dishonour of God, and the marring of their own peace. This is the plain import of many declarations and warnings of Scripture ; and nothing is more alarming to them than the apprehension of such onsets, nothing more distracting than the experience of them. But in all they have relief and refuge in the sympathy of their High Priest. “In that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.”² Among his other sufferings, he was assaulted and sore tempted of the devil, especially at the commencement and close of his course. He knows from experience both the wiles and the violence of this arch-adversary—the baits by which he allures, and the fiery darts by which he distracts the mind. At the beginning of his ministry, Satan tempted him chiefly to presumption and pride ; at the termination of it, to despondency and despair. Every temptation was addressed to some principle of human nature, and although our Lord resisted them, and never yielded to them in a single instance or in the slightest degree, yet he knows from what “he himself suffered, being tempted,” the tendency which they have, not only to distress the hearts of his people, but to seduce them from obedience to God, and they may rely on his compassion under them. “Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he might sift thee as wheat ; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not.”

7. He has a fellow-feeling with his people under divine desertion. Job not only had to mourn that God had permitted Satan to afflict him, but was distressed by the suspicion that he himself counted him as an enemy ; and we find other saints complaining often of the hiding

¹ Prov. xviii. 24.

² Heb. ii. 18.

of God's countenance and the anguish which this created. But under this severe trial they have the sympathy of their Head; for this also he suffered, particularly at the close of his life; and none of all his sufferings drew such a bitter complaint from him as this did. When the multitudes that had followed him went back and walked no more with him, he could calmly turn to the twelve with the question, "Will ye also go away?" When Judas came to apprehend him, he merely said, "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" When Peter denied him, he only gave him an upbraiding look. And he was silent before the high priest and Pilate, under all the false accusations brought against him. But when his Father forsook him, he was thrown into an agony, and cried aloud—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" This was equivalent to the pains of hell; and therefore, short of remorse and despair, which are rather sins to be forgiven than sufferings to be compassionated, there is no distress of mind which he did not experience, and with sympathy for which he cannot be affected.

8. Our Lord has a fellow-feeling with his people under the fears of death. Death is what the best of men must undergo. From the beginning of time, two individuals only, and that for high ends, have been exempted from the common fate of fallen man. Sooner or later, Christian, by one path or another, you must descend into the valley of the shadow of death. The frailties and diseases which we feel are all proofs and admonitions that this earthly tabernacle, in which our souls reside for a little, must be dissolved. Nor is it a light thing to die. The prospect of it is naturally calculated to excite serious thoughts and alarming apprehensions. Death breaks asunder the closest ties which bind together the nearest relatives, separates us from all in this world, from all that we have known and loved and enjoyed and delighted in, and ushers us into a new state, and a new world, of which we know but little. But in this case also we are warranted to expect the sympathy of the Redeemer. He felt the shrinkings of nature in the prospect of death; and "in the days of his flesh offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death." Nay, "he tasted of death" itself, in all its bitterness. This is, as it were, a new reason for Christians dying—there is a blessed necessity for it, that they may be, "in all points," conformed to their Redeemer. Without this they would not be in every respect like him. There would be a want of harmony between them. They must follow him, not only through a suffering life, but through death, into heaven. This ought to reconcile them to that event, especially when it is considered that his death contains an antidote to all their fears of death. In dying they only drink of his cup, and though they should meet with a violent and bloody death, they are only baptised with his baptism.

In reviewing what has been said, several reflections naturally suggest themselves.

Do not we perceive here a strong analogical proof of the divine origin of the scheme of redemption which the Gospel reveals? For the preservation of the human body, God has established a sympathy between the head and the several members, and by a similar bond has he linked together the members of the great body or family of mankind, and thus provided for their associating and being mutually helpful by bearing one another's burdens. This provision we find also in the mystical body, or family of grace, and especially in the personal and official qualifications of Him who is constituted its life-giving and governing head. He was made in all things like to his brethren, not only by taking part of the same nature with them, but by participating also of the sufferings which they endure in it, that he might be capable of sympathising with them, and be in all points qualified for the discharge of his office towards them, in a merciful, considerate, and tender manner. Did it not "become Him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things," to qualify in this way the Captain of salvation, chosen by him to lead his sons to glory? Say now if the God of nature and the God of grace be not the same? Is it probable that this arrangement could have entered into the mind of man? Could it have been conceived by untaught and simple fishermen? Let your minds dwell for a little longer on this point, my brethren, and you will perceive additional traces of a divine hand rising up. Consider the various purposes which are accomplished by the sufferings of Christ. By them reconciliation was made for sin, and an offended lawgiver propitiated. By them an example of meekness, patience, and fortitude, was left to all his followers. And by them their Redeemer and Forerunner was fitted for sympathising with them under those adversities, which they should endure before they come to the place which he is preparing for their reception and eternal rest. It is a mark of superior wisdom to accomplish several ends by one contrivance. And may we not perceive here a resemblance to "Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan" in the frame and government of the universe?

Here also we have a confirmation of the doctrine of Scripture respecting the divine nature of our high priest and its union to ours. If this were not true, there could be no proper meaning, or at least no real comfort, in the declaration in our text. Christ has passed into the heavens, which must retain him till the restitution of all things. He is far removed from us in respect of his humanity. If he were a mere man, how could he now sympathise with the various and innumerable infirmities of his disciples on earth, or how could they take comfort from being told that he was touched with the feeling for them? But in the light of the truth respecting his person, commonly received among Christians, everything is easy and intelligible. As the omniscient God,

he is perfectly acquainted with their distresses ; and as clothed with our nature, he feels for them as a friend and brother.—Wonderful condescension to our infirmities, in providing a Saviour in whom we have every reason to confide ! Though God is essentially true, yet he has condescended to swear, that we might have an additional confirmation of our faith. And, though infinite in love and mercy, he has condescended to provide for us an High Priest, who, in addition to these perfections, possesses human sympathy !

We have here one great source of relief, support, and consolation, to Christians under their infirmities and afflictions. It is a relief to be pitied in our distress—to see persons feeling for us—to hear from their lips the words of sympathy, although they may not be able to remove the cause of sorrow. And as this is in itself a great alleviation, the want of it is no slight aggravation of trouble. Hence Job exclaimed feelingly, “Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends ; for the hand of God hath touched me.”¹ It was a fresh arrow which went to his heart, to find that they were not touched with a feeling of his heavy and uncommon afflictions. Hence also the complaint of David, as the type of Christ, “I am full of heaviness : I looked for some to take pity on me, but there was none ; and for comforters, but I found none.”² A compassionate word spoken into the ear of those who were going to the stake, has been the means of strengthening them, and they have been refreshed with the knowledge that their friends in the crowd, or in their own houses, were sympathising with and praying for them. How much more refreshing and consolatory to be persuaded that they shared the tender sympathy, never inactive nor ineffectual, of their exalted High Priest, who was praying for them within the vail, and strengthening them with all might by his Spirit in the inner man !

Finally, we may see of what temper and disposition Christians ought to be,—sympathising and compassionate. What Christ has proved himself to be to them, they will show themselves to be to others, and especially to their Christian brethren. This is one proof of their belonging to his mystical body. If one member of the human body suffer, all the members suffer with it ; and so is it with the church, which is the body of Christ. Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, long-suffering ; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, “even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.” Remember the address of the lord to the unmerciful servant : “Shouldst not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee ?”³ Compassion for the temporal distresses of our fellow-creatures is not a sure mark of godliness ; but the want of it is an indubitable mark of ungodliness. “For whoso hath this world’s good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his

¹ Job, xix. 21.

² Psalms, lxi. 20.

³ Matt. xviii. 33.

bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Beware of selfishness, which contracts the heart, and renders it insensible and callous. "Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of another." Thus will the same mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus, for "he is not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

SERMON X.

THE LOVE OF THE SPIRIT.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, for the love of the Spirit."—ROM. xv. 30.

THE volume of nature has the name of its author inscribed upon it, and everywhere bears the most distinct and legible marks of his Godhead and perfections ; but it conveys no information to us of his subsistence in three persons. In the unity of design apparent in the works of nature, and in the nice and admirable adaptation of all parts of the universe to accomplish the same grand ends, which we perceive the more clearly in proportion to the increase of our knowledge, we have a proof of the unity of God which yields satisfaction to a plain and unsophisticated understanding ; but there is nothing either in the work of creation, or in the works of common providence, which indicates any personal distinctions in the Godhead, or, in other words, makes known the doctrine of the Trinity. The knowledge of this mystery we owe to the volume of inspiration, which not only teaches it doctrinally, but reveals and describes a work calculated to illustrate it, and to give us clear, though necessarily, from its nature, inadequate conceptions of the subject. Redemption is the work of one God, but of that one Being existing according to distinct relations of an intrinsic kind, which we, for want of a fitter word, and to guard against the opinions of those who would explain away the whole mystery, are forced to call personal.

The doctrine of the Trinity, as revealed in the Bible, is far from being a mere speculative truth. It lies at the foundation of our hope ; our blessedness is wrapt up "in the love of God, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the communion of the Holy Ghost." It is supposed in all acceptable worship, for "we have access to the Father through the Son, by one Spirit ;"—"our fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ," and this is the fellowship of the Spirit. And as our worship is animated by the distinct consideration of what each person has done for our salvation, so the duties of obedience are enforced upon our minds by the same consideration. Hence the apostle, in entreating the prayers of the Christians at Rome in his behalf, employs the plea in our text, "for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit."

By the "love of the Spirit" I understand that love which the third person of the Godhead has displayed in the economy of redemption. Some indeed are of opinion that it refers to that brotherly love which is the production of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers, and binds them together as members of the same mystical body, so as to feel a deep interest in one another's welfare. Even though it should be allowed that this was the more immediate meaning of the word in this passage, we might still take occasion from it to speak of that love which is the spring of all the Spirit's operations. We judge of the qualities of a fountain from the waters which it sends forth, and of a tree from its fruits. "The fruit of the Spirit is love;" and what must be the love resident in and flowing from that divine Person, who is the author of every affectionate feeling toward God or toward man! But I apprehend the connection in which the words stand fully justifies the other interpretation: "I beseech you from regard to what the Lord has done for you, and the love which the Holy Spirit has shown to you, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me."

We often speak of the love of the Father in not sparing his Son, and the love of the Son in giving himself for us; and we do well, for we cannot speak of them too often, nor with too much fervour of gratitude and admiration. But the love of the Spirit is more rarely the topic of public discourse or private converse, and there is reason to fear that it is too little in our thoughts, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." May not this deficiency have a hurtful effect upon Christian experience? God draws his children to himself "by the cords of love," meaning his own love; but if one of the threads in "this threefold cord" be relaxed, must not the influence of divine love upon our hearts be weakened and impaired? If we are deficient in this part of Christian exercise, it assuredly does not arise from any defect in the proofs and illustration of love on the part of this divine Agent. The subject seems entitled to our particular attention. Let us then, trusting to the aid of the Spirit, without whom we can neither speak nor hear aright, in the *first* place, contemplate the manifestations of the love of the Holy Ghost; and *secondly*, exhibit the influence which a due sense of this love would have on our minds and conduct.

I. Contemplate the manifestations of the love of the Spirit. The work of redemption, or of recovering man from the ruin into which he had fallen by his transgression, is to be traced to the spontaneous and boundless love of God. This wonderful love is held forth as exerted in distinct acts by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To the Father we ascribe, agreeably to the analogy of the word, the purpose and superintendence of the plan of redemption, to the Son its purchase, and to the Spirit its application. The love from which the Spirit acts is equally divine with that from which the Father and Son act; indeed it is the same, for the love of God, like his will, is one. "There is none good

but one, that is God ;” and this epithet is repeatedly applied to the third Person, in an absolute sense : “Thou gavest them thy good Spirit”—“Thy Spirit is good.” The love of the Spirit is eternal, unchangeable, sovereign, independent ; and in its breadth and length, and depth, and height, it passeth knowledge.

1. The Holy Spirit displayed his love in the readiness with which he undertook his mission and work. We speak of the covenant of grace as made between the Father and Son, because, in contemplation of the Son’s assuming human nature, there was an engagement and a promise, a work and reward. But we must not overlook the concurrence of the Blessed Spirit, and the delight which he took in the prospect of his work of grace and power. As the Son was sent by the Father, so the Spirit is sent by the Father and the Son, and on this account is called economically their Spirit ; but he was as free and cheerful in undertaking and engaging in his work, as He who said “Lo I come, to do thy will, O my God.” When Jesus was about to leave his disciples, he said, “I will pray the Father, and he will give you another Comforter—if I go not away the Comforter will not come, but if I depart, I will send him unto you.” Observe, he is not only said to be “sent,” to intimate the established order of the economy of grace, and the certainty of the gift, but he is said to “come,” in order to point out his willingness to engage in the work. “When he is come, he shall convince the world.” Hence the prayer of the Old Testament Church : “Awake, O north wind ; and come, thou south : blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.”¹ And hence on the day of Pentecost, “Suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty rushing wind, and there appeared unto them cloven tongues as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.” These were the emblems of the “love of the Spirit,” in its ardour, impetuosity, and irresistible power. And as he was voluntary in undertaking, so he is sovereign in carrying on his work, “dividing severally to every man as he will.” When we pray the Father to give us the Holy Spirit, we should remember that he whom we ask to dwell in us is a free and independent agent. “Uphold me with thy free Spirit.”²

2. The love of the Spirit appeared in dictating the Scriptures. Saints in every age have loved the word of God, and from the time that it was first committed to writing, they have not ceased to take the highest delight in reading and meditating on its contents. In the Bible they find their meat and their drink, the life and the health of their souls. They could not live without it, and having it they can be contented with a slender portion. “Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever ; for they are the rejoicing of my heart.”³ The longest Psalm that ever David composed is entirely occupied in expressing his esteem for the written law ; there are few of his spiritual songs in which he does

¹ Cant. iv. 16.

² Ps. li. 12.

³ Ps. cxix. iii.

not commend it ; and remember, brethren, his Bible was a small one compared with ours.

All Scripture was given by inspiration, or dictated to the sacred penmen by the Spirit. "Prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ;" and as they spake they wrote. This is true, not only of prophecy strictly so called, or the prediction of future events, but of all the contents of His inspired volume, whether given in the form of doctrine, reproof, exhortation, promise, or even history. Hence the formula used in quoting from any of the books of the Old Testament, "The Holy Ghost saith," whatever prophet was the penman.¹ Even those parts of Scripture which proceeded immediately from the mouth of the Redeemer himself, come to us through the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, who brought them to the remembrance of the evangelists ; and to each of the letters which Christ ordered his servant John to send to the seven Churches of Asia is subjoined the same admonition :—"He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

Would you have a sensible sign and proof of the love of the Spirit ? Here it is. Could there be a greater proof of love than the giving of this Book, so stored with everything that is necessary, and able to make wise to salvation the most simple ? There are three distinguishing gifts of God—the gift of his Son, the gift of his Spirit, and the gift of his Word—and as to each of them we may say "Herein is love." Without the Scriptures, you would have been sitting in the region and shadow of death. Without the Scriptures, you would have known nothing of the plan of mercy and way of salvation ;—you would never have heard of the love of God, of the person, the undertaking, the incarnation, the sacrifice, the sufferings and glory of Christ ; you would never have heard of remission of sins, of peace with God, of the adoption of children, of the inheritance laid up in heaven. If then at any time you have felt your consciences pacified, your difficulties cleared up, your fears dissipated, your minds fortified against temptation, strengthened for duty, or comforted in tribulation, your faith increased, your hope quickened, your love inflamed, your patience promoted, by anything contained in this precious volume—think, oh ! think, of the "love of the Spirit." Christian children, who have been taught the first principles of the oracles of God, think on the love of the Spirit. Christian young men, who from your earliest years have known the Scriptures, think on the love of the Spirit. Christian fathers, who are strong because the word of God abideth in you, think on the love of the Spirit.

3. The love of the Spirit was manifested in preparing and endowing the human nature of the Saviour. All the operations of the divine Spirit in forming those holy men who were raised up for carrying on the work of God under the Old Testament, such as Moses, and David,

¹ Mark, xii. 36 ; Acts, xxviii. 25 ; Heb. iii. 7, and ix. 8.

and Solomon, Isaiah, Zerubabel, and Joshua, who were eminently furnished with gifts and graces for the faithful and wise discharge of their important functions, were nothing compared with this. In the miraculous conception, the Spirit "created a new thing in the earth," bringing "a clean thing out of an unclean," and from a corrupt mass forming a body which was without the least taint of, or tendency to, sin, and thus fitted for becoming the immaculate and blessed body of the Son of God. "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that holy thing, which shall be born of thee, shall be called the Son of God." This was the beginning of those miracles of love, which were wrought with such heavenly profusion and prodigality during our Saviour's abode on earth. According to ancient predictions, the Spirit descended upon and dwelt in that holy nature which he had formed: "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord." And the miracle which accompanied our Lord's baptism held forth emblematically the source, and nature, and design of this unction. "The heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending, like a dove" (the emblem of love), "and lighting upon him." In the glorious person of the Redeemer next to the grace of union, which is the effect of the assumption of human nature by the Son of God, the grace of unction is the most wonderful object of contemplation. "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth: I have put my spirit upon him." If the oil poured on the head of Aaron, which descended to the skirts of his garment, was precious, how much more precious was this heavenly oil which was poured on the Head, and was to descend to the meanest and least member of the mystical body; for God gave not the Spirit by measure to him, and he was given to be imparted to all that believe on him. "Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows." This was the holy anointing oil which was poured on his sacrifice; and as it was through the Eternal Spirit that he offered himself without spot to God, so was he "justified in the Spirit" by his resurrection from the dead.

4. The love of the Spirit is shown in the first visit which he pays to the soul of a sinner, when he comes to take possession of it. When he first enters the place of his future residence, he finds it in a very wretched and repulsive condition. The sinner himself, habituated to his own impurity, can form no conception of the disgust which this heavenly visitant must feel on approaching it, and is apt to wonder at the strong terms in which he has described it. No dungeon, at once dark and cold and filthy,—no lazar who from the sole of the foot to the crown of the head is covered with wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores,—no corpse which has lain for days in the earth, is half so loathsome to the senses as such a soul is to the Holy Spirit, who is "of purer eyes than

to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity." He finds the heart dead to all that is good, yet alive to all that is evil, the mind filled with ignorance of God, and enmity to him, the whole man as proud as poor,—as obstinate as foolish,—as impenitent as guilty. His first approaches are shunned, his overtures rejected, his convictions stifled, his entreaties despised. Yet he perseveres in his gracious design, until he has conquered all opposition, won the soul to Jesus Christ, and formed the heart for a habitation to himself—"the temple of the living God!"

5. The love of this blessed agent is further seen in keeping possession of the soul. There is more love displayed in this, than in taking possession of the soul at first. We expect nothing but resistance and hostility from an enemy, but "he that hath friends, should show himself friendly." Is this then what the saint evinces to his merciful deliverer? Alas! no. How often has the Holy Spirit reason to say, "Is this thy kindness to thy friend?" Who but the blessed guest himself can tell what indignities and provocations he meets with from the time that he takes up his habitation in the heart of a believer? We can scarcely read the history of the unbelieving, ungrateful, and rebellious conduct of the Israelites in the wilderness without being provoked; yet it is a true picture of our own conduct: "He gave them his good Spirit to instruct them, but they rebelled, and vexed his Holy Spirit." And how often do professing Christians and genuine saints themselves rebel, and vex and grieve the Spirit by their slowness of heart to understand and believe the word which he hath spoken, and brought to their remembrance, by despising the hidden manna with which he has fed their souls, by indulging the wish to return to spiritual Sodom and Egypt, by calling in question those promises which he has sealed on their hearts, by quenching his motions, and acting contrary to those principles which he has implanted within them! On these accounts he is provoked to withhold his sensible and comforting influence, and threatens to withdraw from them. And yet he abides with them. "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." "Many waters cannot quench his love, neither can the floods drown it."

6. We have an additional proof of the love of the Spirit in the peculiar work which he carries on in the hearts of believers. "The sanctification of the Spirit" is the comprehensive phrase under which his gracious work is held forth in Scripture. "We are bound always to give thanks for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God has chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit."¹ The blood of Jesus is the meritorious and procuring cause of our title to eternal life, but there is a meetness for, as well as a title to eternal life, and the one as well as the other is necessary to our enjoyment of this beatitude. It is the work of the Spirit to renew us after the image of

God—to conform us to the image of his Son, to make us partakers of a divine nature, and thus fit us for divine fellowship. And he it is who renders all the means of producing this effectual, whether the word, or sacraments, or prayer. “We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”¹ Those who preach the Gospel, or dispense the sacraments, have only a ministerial instrumentality in advancing this work of God. The Spirit is the efficient agent and author of it. “Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.”²

There are many things comprehended in this work by which the Spirit manifests his love. He takes of the things of Christ—his atonement and righteousness, and shows them unto believers, giving them fellowship with the Redeemer in his death and resurrection—he sheds abroad the love of God in their hearts—he gives them access to God with boldness and confidence, enabling them to cry Abba Father, and helping them in their prayers—he seals them as the chosen of the Father, and the redeemed of the Son, and preserves them from the allurements of the world, the temptations of Satan, and everything which would entangle or draw them aside in their Christian course. His residence in their hearts is an earnest of the heavenly inheritance to which they have been predestinated, and his operations are the first fruits of that glory which awaits them.

Here we are particularly to call to mind his character as the Comforter, in which he was promised by Christ, and the manner in which he discharges it in all the distresses, afflictions, and tribulations, outward and inward, to which believers are exposed in the present state. In none of these is the Comforter, who only can relieve their souls, far off. All the peace, and solace, and joy which they feel under their trials, and by which they are sometimes made to glory in them, are to be traced to this source. Hence we read of “the comfort of the Holy Ghost,” and “joy in the Holy Ghost.”

In fine, the Spirit manifests his love, by the termination to which he brings his work in believers. “He that hath begun the good work will perfect it unto the day of Jesus Christ.” He will make their souls perfect in holiness at death, and their bodies, in which he has resided here as a temple, he will raise up at the last day, fashioning them according to the glorious body of Christ. “If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.”³

II. I now proceed to exhibit the influence which the love of the Spirit ought to have upon us. It is calculated to have an influence upon

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 18.

² 2 Cor. iii. 3.

³ Rom. viii. 11.

the whole of our life and exercise. The person who feels it, will "live in the Spirit," will "walk in the Spirit." There is no duty which it will not enforce, no sin from which it will not dissuade. I shall select a few instances by way of specimen.

1. It should excite us to love the Spirit. Love begets love ; "we love him because he first loved us." Love and gratitude, as terminating on the Holy Spirit, and created by his gracious acts, is no less a Christian grace than love to the Father and Son. Indeed, love to the Spirit is included in love to the Father and the Son. It is the work of the Spirit to open up the fountain of redeeming love, and the wide and deep channel in which it flows to sinners in all its refreshing and salutary streams. He cannot be dishonoured, or his work be contemned, if the Father and the Son are loved and glorified. Yet there is an honour and a duty which we owe to him, and which ought not to be withheld. Perhaps the believer's experience in this matter may be illustrated by a familiar example. If a stranger should come to any of you with the intelligence of the safety of a son in a foreign land, whom you had given up as dead, you would be so overjoyed with the message, and so occupied in reading the letters, and looking on the pledges transmitted by your absent child, that you might forget the messenger, and allow him to stand at the door ; but no sooner would the paroxysm of joy subside, than you would recollect yourself, receive the messenger with due respect, and load him with marks of gratitude for the kind service which he had performed. In like manner, the believer may at first be so rapt in the contemplation of God, even the Father who hath loved us, and of the Son who gave himself for us, as for a time to overlook the divine Agent who opened his eyes upon such a discovery of grace ; but when he recollects himself, he cries out, "Is it thou, Lord ? Come in, thou blessed of the Lord, why standest thou without ?"

The self-evidencing light of the Gospel, shining into the soul in the day of conversion, may be so strong and overpowering that the person may wonder that he should ever have resisted it for a moment ; his conviction of its truth may be so clear, and his reception of it so cordial, that he may be apt to overlook the supernatural agency on his soul, and to think that he can never again call it in question. It is not till he has lost sight of it, and relapsed into partial unbelief and darkness, that he becomes thoroughly aware that he owed his discoveries to the illumination of the Spirit, and that this is necessary to preserve and revive them. Then he is ready to say, "O blessed Spirit, thou didst visit me when I was an outcast, and lying in my blood ; I was dead in trespasses and sins, and thou didst quicken me ; I was blind to the things which belonged to my peace, and thou didst unseal the eyes of my understanding ; my heart was filled with enmity to God, and thou didst cleanse me in the laver of regeneration ; I was diseased as well as loathsome, and thou didst heal all my diseases by the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, and by thy precious ointments. By thy grace I am

what I am. What shall I render unto thee for all thy benefits unto me?"

2. It should beget love to the brethren. All true saints are in common the offspring and workmanship of the Spirit; and "he who loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." There is a union among true Christians, and this is the unity of the Spirit. "There is one body, and one Spirit." "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ; for by one Spirit we are all baptised into one body, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." True believers are all united to Christ by the same Spirit. They are brought to the knowledge of the truth, and the love of the truth, and the comfort of the truth, by the same Spirit. By the same Spirit they live and move, and have their being, in Christ. The love of the Spirit is, as it were, the common blood which flows in all their veins, binding them together as one family, and affectionately causing them to cleave to and sympathise with one another. "If there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind." In vain do we pretend to the Spirit, if we have bitter envying and strife dwelling in us; for the love of the Spirit cannot dwell with these malevolent passions: but "if we love one another, God dwelleth in us; and hereby we know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us."

3. It should encourage us to dépend upon and apply for the influences of the Spirit. Without him we can do nothing; he works in us both "to will and to do of his good pleasure." Everything that is good about any person—faith, love, purity, patience—is of his production. When a Christian thinks of the duties incumbent upon him, their number and importance, and at the same time reflects on his own weakness, he is ready to exclaim, "Who is sufficient for these things?" In such circumstances let him think of the love of the Spirit, and that he is not only able but willing to "do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."

The Spirit is promised, and we are encouraged to pray the Father for him. "If ye, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him." O! is not this encouraging, that so far from being reluctant to the work, he is as ready to go as the Father or the Son is to send?

Christians complain of their unfitness for duty, and they sometimes make this an excuse for neglecting it. There might have been some show of reason in this excuse, had not God made such rich and suitable provision to relieve our necessities, and help our infirmities. You are unfit for duty, even indisposed to it? Granted; but is not the Spirit able "to strengthen you with all might in the inner man?" And is he

not willing, and waiting for employment? Have you applied to him particularly? If not, you have not received, and justly, because you have not asked. Or if you have asked, you have not asked in the faith of his love; you have had doubts of this, and these doubts have prevented you from relying on his influences.

4. It should excite us to abound in prayer. It is in reference to this duty that the Apostle in our text avails himself of the argument from the love of the Spirit. "I beseech you, brethren, for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me." There is a twofold argument here: one bearing on the duty of praying for one another, founded on the Spirit's being the bond of union among all the members of the mystical body, which we have already adverted to; the other bearing on prayer in general, whether for ourselves or others. This implies that the consideration of the love of the Spirit is a great inducement to prayer. And how? Because one way in which he manifests his love is by assisting us in our addresses to the throne of grace. On this account he is called the "Spirit of supplications,"¹ and is said to help our infirmities in this duty. "The Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."²

He sheds abroad the love of God in the heart, and thereby encourages us to come to him, as our heavenly Father. Christ by his mediation has procured access for us to God; the Spirit gives us access by discovering to us the living way consecrated by the blood of Christ, and powerfully brings us near: "through Christ we have access by one Spirit unto the Father." The Holy Spirit is promised in the character of a Comforter, or, as the word also signifies, a patron or advocate. What rich and superabundant provision has a God of grace made for us in the new covenant! How inexcusable, if we do not come to the throne of grace! We have an advocate without us, and within us, in heaven and in our own breasts. It is a great encouragement to prayer that we have in Christ an advocate with the Father, who is ready to present our petitions and to obtain a hearing for us. But is it not an additional incentive that in the Holy Spirit we have one who will draw up our petitions, and help us to put them into the hands of Christ? And this last is agreeable to the will of God, as well as the former: "And he that searcheth the hearts, knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God."³

How great an encouragement to prayer this is, those only know who have felt enlargement of heart and confidence in prayer, and who have also felt the want of these. Formerly they were dragged or driven to the throne of grace by conscience, or the urgency of external circumstances; now they come to it of their own accord and cheerfully.

¹ Zech. xii. 10.

² Rom. viii. 26.

³ Rom. viii. 27.

Formerly they thought it enough that they prayed publicly and at stated times ; now they embrace every opportunity of engaging in the exercise, and “pray always.” Formerly their prayers were formal and cold, now they pour out their hearts to God, order their cause before him, and fill their mouths with arguments. This is prayer—“praying in the Holy Ghost.”

5. It should make us careful to avoid everything that may grieve the Spirit. We are uncommonly tender of offending a person who has done us a kindness, and will deny ourselves many things which are agreeable from an apprehension that our indulging in them would grieve him. The very expression “grieving the Spirit,” points to his love. An enemy is provoked if we injure him, and he is gratified if he see us injuring ourselves ; it is a friend only—one who really loves us, and wishes our welfare—who can be *grieved* at our improper conduct. Unregenerated persons vex the Spirit ; believers grieve him. “Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.”¹

A persuasion and feeling of the love of the Spirit will dispose believers to act in such a way as is pleasing to him, and to avoid everything which grieves him. Nor is it difficult to know what pleases him on the one hand, or what offends him on the other. Saints know it by a divine instinct—the Spirit witnesses to it with their spirit. The fruit of the Spirit and the works of the flesh are as much opposed as light and darkness. All sin is displeasing to him, but there are some sins which are eminently offensive in his sight. He is the “good Spirit,” and therefore all wrath, malice, and envy are opposed to him. He is “the Spirit of truth,” and therefore all falsehood and lying are dishonouring to him. He is “the Holy Spirit,” and therefore all impurity in heart, speech, and behaviour are offensive to him. You will see all these sins warned against, as grieving to the Spirit, in the fourth chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

This subject affords matter of self-examination and exhortation. Let me ask you what know ye of the love of the Spirit ? There are persons present, I am afraid, who have no part or lot in this matter, who “have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost”²—who never saw any need for his gracious influences—who never were concerned to obtain them ; who never read or prayed, or performed any other duty in the Spirit. “These be they who are sensual, having not the Spirit.”³ Let such consider the solemn declaration of an inspired writer, “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.”⁴ Those who are strangers to the work of the Spirit are strangers to the work of the Saviour. All who are in Christ, and to whom there is no condemnation, “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”

But though you know him not, you have to do with him, and he with you. He speaks to you in the Scriptures, he speaks to you by the preach-

¹ Eph. iv. 30.

² Acts, xix. 2.

³ Jude, 19.

⁴ Rom. viii. 9.

ing of the gospel, which is the "ministration of the Spirit." The apostle Peter tells us, that "Christ was put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit, by which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison, which sometime were disobedient, when the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah." The inhabitants of the antediluvian world thought that they had to do only with Noah, and that it was easy for them to contend with him, and despise his warnings and exhortations. But it turned out at last that they had been resisting one infinitely greater: "The Lord said, MY SPIRIT shall not always strive with man;" and this added greatly to their sin and condemnation. This was the great sin of the Israelites in the wilderness, and it is still the sin of gospel despisers; "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost." There are two things which aggravate the guilt of the finally unbelieving and impenitent under the gospel, and render their doom unspeakably more dreadful than that of the heathen. First, they have despised and repudiated the love of God manifested in the death of his Son; and, secondly, they have resisted and quenched the motions of the Holy Spirit, and poured contempt upon his love in the application of redemption. "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?" Contemptuous resistance of the motions of the Holy Spirit is the crowning part of their sin. And justly so; for (and this is the reason why the sin against the Holy Ghost is irremissible) it is an offence against the love of God in the last and the most ample display of it. O bring not down this fearful doom upon your head, gospel hearer!—and there is only one way in which you can avert it, by yielding to the call of the gospel, and believing on the name of the Son of God. Whither can you go from the Spirit of God, or flee from his presence? Though you should resolve never to hear another sermon, never again to open a Bible, though you should resolve to leave a land of gospel privileges, and hide yourself in the darkest thicket of heathenism, you would carry in your bosom, like the stricken deer, the arrow of conviction and death. You have heard of a Saviour, and have rejected him; you have become the subject of the Spirit's calls, and have resisted them. But my text leads me to employ the allurements of the gospel, rather than the terrors of the law. "I beseech you by the love of the Spirit" to comply with the calls of grace—to come to the Saviour. "The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him come, and take of the waters of life freely."

Believers should not be contented with owning the nature and work of the Spirit; they should seek to know and believe his love, to taste that he is gracious. Have you ever had the love of God shed abroad in your heart, Christian? Has Christ been precious to you? Has the

word been sweet to your taste? Have you had freedom at the throne of grace? Have you been made to eat at a communion-table of the things wherewith the atonement was made? Have you been comforted under affliction? These are just the fruits of the Spirit, and the evidences of his love. Lay open your hearts to his benign influences; cherish his motions, and honour the Spirit, even as you honour the Father and the Son. Let others scoff at the doctrine of divine influences, and the inhabitation of the Spirit, as the effect of enthusiasm; "but ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

Finally, let us be instructed where to look for the cure and rectification of all the evils which afflict the Church in our day!—to the love of the Spirit. By our misimprovement and abuse of our privileges, by our unchristian temper and carriage, by our worldly spirit and untender conversation, we have provoked the Spirit to withdraw from us, and the consequence has been that the glory has departed from our Israel, and ordinances have become in a great measure inefficacious and unsuccessful. "Who hath believed our report, and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Who is convinced of sin? Who cries out, "What must I do to be saved?" Who receives the word gladly? Who brings forth fruit to perfection? Where are the fruits of the gospel, even where it is purely preached? "Woe is me! for I am as when they have gathered the summer-fruits, as the grape gleanings of the vintage: there is no cluster to eat; my soul desired the first-ripe fruit. The good man is perished out of the earth; and there is none upright among men."¹ Our carelessness, our conformity to the world, and our mournful divisions, have wasted and nearly consumed the vitals of true Christianity, and left us little more than a spiritless and unsightly skeleton. "Our leanness, our leanness, woe unto us! the treacherous dealers have dealt treacherously; yea, the treacherous dealers have dealt very treacherously."²

Yet there is hope in the love of the Spirit. It is divine, and therefore infinite, sovereign, and free. He is God, and not man; he will turn again, he will have compassion upon us; he will subdue our iniquities, and cast all our sins into the depths of the sea. Let us lament after the Lord, the Spirit, and implore his return. Come from the four winds, O breath of the Lord, and breathe upon the slain that they may live! Wilt thou not revive us again, that we may rejoice in thee? The love of the Spirit shed abroad in the heart would quicken, and restore, and soften, and sanctify. It would correct all the evils among us, private and public. It would remove all grounds of division, and, what is more difficult still, it would remove all that spirit of alienation, and enmity, and jealousy, which our controversies have engendered, even in

¹ Micah, vii. 1.

² Isa. xxiv. 16.

the hearts of those who have been contending for truth and purity. It would be like oil poured upon the waters of strife, stilling the noise of their waves, and the tumult which they have excited. It would induce the contending parties to confess their faults one to another, or rather bring both to their knees before God, in joint confession, and inspire them with a holy emulation to strive who should be first in repairing the desolations of Zion, and in bringing back the King of the Church to his own house.

SERMON XI.

CHRISTIAN WATCHFULNESS.

"And what I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch."—MARK, xiii. 37.

IN the word of God every duty is enjoined and enforced by suitable motives ; but you must have observed that certain duties are more frequently introduced, and dwelt upon with greater particularity and earnestness, than others. They are stated and re-stated, enjoined and re-enjoined, enforced and illustrated, in such a manner as to impress them on our memories and imaginations, as well as on our hearts and consciences. From this we have reason to conclude, either that they are of superior importance, intrinsically or relatively, or else that we are in peculiar danger of overlooking and forgetting them. Of this description is the duty inculcated in the text. It is often brought forward in the discourses of our Lord, who has enforced it by examples, and illustrated it by parables. He enforced it by the history of the inhabitants of the old world, and of Sodom and Gomorrah ; and he illustrated it by the parable of the ten virgins, and, in the passage before us, by the parable of the lord of a household, who, on undertaking a far journey, assigned to all his servants their several employments, and commanded the porter to watch.

He "commanded the porter to watch." This does not merely mean that, in allotting to each in the family his specific task, he ordered them to keep the door and preserve the house from the invasion of thieves and robbers, but it intimates that he kept the time of his return a secret, enjoining the porter to be ready to open to him on whatever night, and at whatever hour of the night, he might arrive ; so that the charge to the porter was a warning to the whole household—to those who were in authority, and to those who were under authority : to the former, that they should not become unfaithful, extravagant, or tyrannical ; to the latter, that they should not prove careless, idle, or unruly, lest their master should come upon them unawares, and find them in fault. Thus, what he said to one of them—the porter—he said to all. It was as much as if he had gone round the whole, and said to each, Watch, watch, watch. This, at least, is the application which our Lord makes of the parable. "Watch ye, therefore ; for ye know

not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning ; lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping." The words of the text may be viewed as an answer to the question which Peter asked—"Lord, speakest thou this parable to us, or even to all?" It is particularly addressed to those who are watchmen by office in the church ; but not to them exclusively. What is primarily addressed to the angels of the churches, is spoken to all in the churches. He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear ; for to him it is said, Watch.

I propose, first, to explain, and then to enforce, the duty of Christian watchfulness.

I. To watch is, literally, to keep from sleep ; and it has come to signify, metaphorically, to apply the mind to anything with great care, diligence, and intensity.

1. Christian watchfulness, or vigilance, is that state of mind by which we are prepared to seize every opportunity of doing our duty, and to discover and avoid every impediment in the way of this. It does not lie in any particular exercise of the mind, like believing, loving, hoping ; but it is a settled frame or posture of the soul, capacitating it for putting forth these and other exercises in the best manner, according to circumstances. It is not confined to looking out for the coming of Christ to us at death and judgment. We are to "watch in all things,"¹ "watch unto prayer," and other duties, and watch against temptation.

To be a Christian is one thing ; to be a vigilant Christian is another. A man, though alive, may be asleep, and his property may become the prey of the thief when he is in this state as easily as if he were dead ; and as one may be alive without being lively, so one may be awake without being wakeful. Christian vigilance is combined with wisdom, producing a perspicacity or quick understanding in matters of judgment, and a circumspection in matters of practice. "See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise ; wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."² Diligence and vigilance are closely connected in the Christian life, but they are not the same. Diligence is mere activity. A man may be busily employed, and yet to very little purpose, or in a way different from that in which he ought to be employed. Vigilance has a special respect to the occasions and opportunities of action, which it enables to discover and improve.

The husbandman is vigilant when he observes and improves the proper seasons of ploughing, sowing, reaping, and other agricultural employments. The merchant is vigilant when he seizes on the proper times for buying and selling, for laying in and disposing of his stock. The man of business, whatever his employment may be, is vigilant when he looks well into his affairs, examines his books, strikes his

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 5.

² Eph. v. 15—17.

balance, and ascertains exactly whether, and to what extent, he is gaining or losing. The soldier is vigilant when he observes the motions of the enemy, guards against surprise, and embraces the most favourable opportunity for an attack. The mariner is vigilant when he is prepared to take advantage of wind and tide, and cautiously avoids the rocks and shoals to which his vessel is exposed. The Christian is vigilant when he exercises every grace, performs every duty, and waits on every ordinance in its proper season ; when he is aware of the sin that easily besets him, and keeps his eye on the temptations to which he is peculiarly exposed ; when he walks wisely, warily, circumspectly ; when, guarding against extremes, he joins trembling with his mirth in prosperity, and mingles joy with his sorrow in the day of affliction ; when, sensible of the value of time, he redeems it by improving the precious moments to the best purposes ; when he is ready to turn every event which befalls himself or others to his spiritual improvement ; and, in fine, when knowing the uncertainty of life and its enjoyments, he stands prepared, or endeavours to prepare himself, for eternity. This is Christian watchfulness.

2. Christian watchfulness is a duty of great importance. You may have some idea of its extent from the general description which we have just given. It reaches to all our internal exercises and all our external actions. It keeps the gracious dispositions in action, and the corrupt dispositions in check. It maintains an animating superintendency over both the natural and the spiritual senses. It makes the Christian "ready to every good work ;" and is a chief means to "preserve him from every evil work." Would you recover from the spiritual decline into which you have fallen ? "Be watchful ; and strengthen the things which remain and are ready to die."¹ Would you preserve your spiritual attainments ? "Look to yourselves, that ye lose not the things which ye have wrought, but that ye receive a full reward."²

The occupation of a porter or door-keeper is inferior in respectability to other offices in a great establishment ; but the duty intrusted to him is nevertheless of great importance. His negligence lays the house open to every intruder. If the sentinel falls asleep at his post, the whole army may be surprised and cut off. If the man stationed at the gate is unfaithful, the fortress may be taken without assault, and the whole garrison put to the sword. A man ignorant of the management of a ship, when he sees all hands busily at work—some climbing the mast, others hoisting the sails, and others plying at the pump, will be apt to look on the pilot as a lazy supernumerary who spends his time in gazing idly at the stars, and amusing himself with turning a piece of timber from side to side ; not aware that this man's services are of all others the most essential to the progress of the vessel on her way, and to the safety of all who are on board. In like manner, though there

¹ Rev. iii. 2.

² 2 John, 8.

are Christian graces and duties which are of greater dignity, vigilance is of the greatest utility. Your faith, Christians, will fail, your hope languish, your love wax cold, if your vigilance be relaxed. Your knowledge will puff you up, your confidence will become presumptuous, your humility distrustful, if you slacken your vigilance. You will flag in prayer, and be weary in well-doing—the slightest temptation will be an overmatch for you,—and though strong as Samson, you will become weak as any other man, if in an evil hour your vigilance be laid asleep. Vigilance is the sentinel of the soul, which guards all the graces and excites them to activity. It is like the watchman going his rounds announcing the hours as they pass, telling “what of the night,” proclaiming that all is well, or sounding an alarm at the appearance of danger.

3. If you would comply with the exhortation in the text, you must avoid everything which induces unwatchfulness. Indulgence in any sin has this effect. It acts as an opiate on conscience, grieves the Spirit, and produces carnal security. Intemperance in sensual pleasures is in a special manner to be avoided, as it has an equal tendency to inflict a bodily and a spiritual stupor. Of the sober Christian it may be said, “He sleeps, but his heart wakes ;” the reverse is true of the intemperate man. Hence the admonition of our Saviour : “Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and that day come upon you unawares.” “Let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober.” Unless you “be sober,” you cannot “be watchful.” Those of other occupations can make a shift to perform their tasks, though they are not patterns of sobriety ; but a watchman *must* be sober. A single instance of intoxication will cost him his post ; in time of war it will cost a sentinel his life. Remember, too, that a slight degree of intemperance will be sufficient to banish spiritual vigilance. It is not necessary to this that you become a drunkard, or even that you be drunken. You may retain the use of your natural senses, and yet lose the use of your spiritual senses ; you may be capable of performing your civil duties, and yet be incapable of performing religious duties ; you may be able to converse with your fellow-creatures, and yet be very unfit for conversing with your God ; you may see and avoid the stone which lies before your feet, and yet fall headlong over the stumblingblock of iniquity ; you may be able to ward off the blow aimed at your body, while your better part is left unshielded and exposed to the fiery darts of the wicked.

If you would be vigilant, you must also guard against anxious and distracting solicitude about the world, which carries away the mind from spiritual things, and leads it into temptation before we are aware. Though temperate in meat and drink, and every other corporeal enjoyment, yet your thoughts may be so engrossed with secular concerns, with your lawful employments, that you are quite absent in spirit at a throne of grace, and when sitting in the house of God as his people sit,

your hearts may be going after their covetousness. Hence our Lord, in assigning the reasons why the day of the Son of Man comes upon some unawares, joins "the cares of this life" with intemperance. Self-confidence has also a great tendency to throw a Christian off his guard. This was the cause of Peter's unwatchfulness and fall; and it seems to have exerted a dangerous influence, along with "the pride of life," on the minds of his two brethren, the sons of Zebedee. To the question of their Master, "Are ye able to drink of the cup that I drink of?" they replied boldly and inconsiderately, "We are able;" and yet they "could not watch with him one hour." "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." In fine, you should guard against immoderate grief. Whatever oppresses the body or exhausts the animal spirits, brings on drowsiness and sleep. When Jesus returned to the three disciples in the garden, he found them "sleeping for sorrow." A paroxysm of grief is sometimes succeeded by a fit of lethargy. Nor is this confined to sorrow for worldly losses and calamities. Even grief for sin may be carried to excess; and we ought to comfort ourselves and others by the doctrine of forgiveness and its uses, "lest being swallowed up of overmuch sorrow, Satan should get an advantage of us, for we are not ignorant of his devices."¹

4. Be diligent in those duties which have a tendency to keep you watchful. If a person sit down and fold his hands, he becomes drowsy. If the watchman were to seat himself in his sentry-box, he would be in danger of falling asleep, and therefore he keeps himself awake by walking about. It is the same in the spiritual as in the natural world. This is the reason why the duty in our text is so often connected with prayer. "Watch and pray, that ye enter not in temptation." "Watch ye and pray always." And in the words preceding the text, "Take ye heed, watch and pray." We are to watch that we may pray, and to pray that we may be kept watching. Had the disciples imitated the example of their Master, they would not have proved disobedient to his command,—"Watch ye here, while I go and pray yonder." Nor is prayer the only remedy against unwatchfulness. Give yourselves to reading, to meditation, to praise. Warning the Christians at Ephesus against being drunk with wine, the apostle adds, "but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to yourselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs." Carnal men, when heated with wine, keep themselves awake and make merry, by singing profane and lewd songs; Christians are to express their joy by singing praises unto God. Though you are to maintain a becoming consistency of behaviour, your exercise will not be monotonous and wearisome, but varied according to your circumstances and the calls of Providence. "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms." Christian converse is another means of preserving vigilance. When two persons watch together, they keep one another awake by conversation, and were Christians to speak to one another about spiritual

things more frequently and more frankly than they do, they would be in less danger of unwatchfulness. "Consider one another, to provoke unto love and to good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."

Nor are we to exclude activity in secular duties from the means of preserving us in this frame of spirit. Slothfulness, in all its forms, is the enemy of Christian vigilance. If the devil find a man idle, he will set him to work, or else lay him asleep. It was when Joseph went into the house, in the discharge of his duty, that when his chastity was attacked, he withstood the temptation: David fell before the same temptation, when "he abode at Jerusalem, and walked on the roof of the king's house," unmindful that the ark was lodged in a tent, and that his servants were encamped in the open fields. Be "diligent in business," if you would be "fervent in spirit;" for it is only by obeying both injunctions, that you will be found faithfully "serving the Lord." Under the influence of superstitious and mistaken notions, some have kept frequent and protracted vigils, or spent the greater part of their time in meditation, prayer, and other religious duties, to the neglect of their secular duties in the family or the world, or to the injury of their bodily health and animal spirits. This error, in the way of excess, though less frequent among us, ought to be avoided as well as the opposite extreme. Besides necessary employments of a worldly kind, there are lawful and innocent recreations, the moderate indulgence of which, so far from injuring, tends to promote spiritual watchfulness. The watchman must have his due hours of rest; and in the present life the soul can no more continue in a healthful and vigorous state without relaxation, than the body can without sleep. I may add, that it is a mistake to suppose that Christian vigilance consists in keeping the mind constantly and intensely fixed on death and judgment. This would unfit you for living, and for consecrating your lives to the glory of God. You should think of them as a traveller thinks of home, in such a way as to induce him to push forward on his journey, and despatch his business in the several towns and villages on the road, with all due diligence and convenient expedition.

5. You must watch in dependence on divine keeping. While dutiful in keeping your hearts with all diligence, and in exciting them to vigilance, you need to commit yourselves "unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless." To the heart may well be applied the words of the Psalmist: "Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain." The most vigilant person may be thrown off his guard, or overpowered with sleep, and so be taken by surprise. What a privilege is it, and what an encouragement ought it to be to unremitting diligence, that we have an ever-watchful and faithful friend to pray for us, that our faith fail not in the hour of trial, and to ward off danger from us when we are in those states of body or mind

which incapacitate us for using the means of protection. "Commit thy way unto the Lord, trust also in him, and he will bring it to pass. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved; he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul."

II. Having explained the duty, I shall endeavour to enforce it by a few considerations.

1. You have vigilant adversaries. You live in an evil and ensnaring world, like the wilderness through which Israel was made to pass, "a land of deserts and of pits, wherein were fiery serpents and scorpions."¹ You live in the midst of enemies who wait for your halting, and are ever ready to take advantage of the least instance of precipitation or inadvertence in your conduct. It becomes you to take heed to your ways, and to set a watch before your mouth, because of observers, including not only the openly wicked, but also false brethren, unawares brought into your fellowship, who come in privily to spy out your liberty, and to whom you should be careful to afford no occasion of slander or reproach against your good profession. And at the head of all your adversaries is one, who is experienced in wiles as he is inveterate in malice and cruelty. "Be sober, be vigilant; for your adversary the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour."

2. You have weak and deceitful hearts, easily intimidated, and easily seduced. Surely that fortress ought to be guarded with double care which is surrounded by a powerful enemy, and has inmates who are disposed to open the gates to the besiegers through cowardice or treachery. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God." "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool."

3. Consider what you have to lose. Not worldly wealth, or honour, or life; but your souls, an incorruptible inheritance, a crown of life that fadeth not away, eternal glory; the precious seed of the word sown in your hearts, the grace of God, your peace of mind, your reputation, attainments, and experiences. In one unguarded moment you may throw away the fruit of the toils, and sufferings, and sacrifices of many years; and though you should find mercy to recover, and bring you to repentance, you will lay up matter for long regret and bitter sorrow. How many favourable seasons do we lose by unwatchfulness! opportunities of doing good to others, and of promoting our own spiritual advantage, which, when allowed to slip, never return! How quick-sighted is the watchman, and how correct the report which he makes: "He cried, A lion: My lord, I stand continually upon the watch-tower in the day time, and I am set in my ward whole nights; and, behold, here cometh a chariot of men, with a couple of horsemen;—a chariot of

¹ Jer. ii. 6; Deut. viii. 15.

asses, and a chariot of camels ; and he hearkened diligently with much heed." ¹ If the King of Israel was surprised, it was not the fault of his servant, who said, "I see a company ; and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi ; for he driveth furiously." ²

4. Consider your profession, privileges, and prospects. You profess to be of God, to have renounced this world, and to have become the followers of Christ Jesus. You have enlisted under the banners of the Captain of salvation, and sworn allegiance to him. You have set out fair, and run well. "Now is your salvation nearer than when you believed." The reward set before you is unspeakably glorious, and your encouragements high. You have exceeding great and precious promises, and examples of the noblest and most animating kind. Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider Christ Jesus, and the great cloud of witnesses with which ye are compassed about. Watch ye ; stand fast in the faith ; quit you like men ; be strong.

5. Consider that ye have an omniscient eye continually upon you. We may contrive to escape or conceal ourselves from the scrutiny and observation of friends and foes—of parents, ministers, fellow-Christians, and, what is still more difficult, of Satan ; but there is one eye which we cannot elude, and which is fixed upon us every moment, by night and by day, in solitude and in society, in the church and in the world. O that we could live under the habitual belief and impression of this strange but undoubted truth ! Then would there be little danger of our falling into slothfulness and carnal security. "These things saith the Son of God, who hath his eyes like unto a flame of fire ; I know thy works : be watchful."

6. You know not how soon you may be called upon to give in your accounts, and to appear before the bar of your Judge. This solemn consideration is often brought forward as an enforcement to the exhortation in our text. It is repeatedly urged in the context, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man. Take ye heed ; watch and pray ; for ye know not when the time is. Watch ye therefore ; for ye know not when the Master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cock-crowing, or in the morning, lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping." And in the book of Revelation he saith : "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments." That "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to give an account of the deeds done in the body," is a most undoubted truth, and a truth which ought to excite us to unwearied diligence and unremitting watchfulness. Such was its effect on the minds of the apostles ; and should it exert a weaker influence on ours ? "It is appointed to men once to die, and after death the judgment." We know not what time shall elapse between our death and the general judgment ; but we know that no change can take place on our state for

¹ Isa. xxi. 7, 8, 9.

² 2 Kings, ix. 17, 20.

eternity between these two periods ; so that, as to all practical purposes, we should view them as coincident. How solicitous, then, should we be to be ready for this event, though we were assured that our lives should extend to threescore and ten, or fourscore years !

But have we any security for this ? Ah, no ! So far from it, nothing is more uncertain. We know not the hour, the day, or the year. This is carefully concealed from us ; and why ? For this, among other reasons, that we may watch, and be always ready. How many striking and loud warnings of the uncertainty of time do we receive in the course of Providence, by the sudden removal, not only of the aged, the infirm, and sickly, but of the young, the healthy, and the strong—our equals or juniors—our intimate acquaintance—those who had spoken to us the word of the Lord, or to whom we had spoken it, who had less appearance of being dying men than many of us have, and perhaps had as little thought of dying as the most careless person present has at this moment ! In such events the Lord's voice crieth, and the men of wisdom understand it. But, alas ! where are they ? How few hear the rod, and him that hath appointed it ! Such warnings, when they occur, form the subject of talk—often vain, idle, and unprofitable talk—for a little ; but within a few days, a few short days, they are forgotten, and the thoughts of preparation for death are lost in the bustle of worldly business, perhaps drowned in the intoxicating cup of pleasure. We are like persons in a deep sleep, who have been roused by a sudden noise : they start up, gaze round, and eagerly listen. But the noise has ceased : they lay themselves down again, and sink into a profounder sleep than that from which they had been awakened.

In this manner some sleep on until they “open their eyes in hell, being in torments”—open their eyes to shut them no more for ever, in a state in which they shall invoke sleep, but it shall fly from them. Others may be aroused by the harbingers of the king of terrors, but, like the foolish virgins in the parable, too late for the preparations which they require, and so distracted with terrors that they “cannot find their hands.” Even genuine Christians, in consequence of their being sinfully off their guard, may be taken by surprise, thrown into alarm, and hurried in great confusion into the presence of their Lord, like persons overtaken by a storm, and caught up by the whirlwind, who are amazed to find themselves, they know not how, in a place of refuge and safety.

What is the improvement which we should make of such warnings ? Surely, to be ready for the call whenever it may be addressed to us. And this preparation is twofold—habitual and actual—as to state and as to exercise. That person is *habitually* prepared for death who has acquainted himself with God and is at peace with him, whose sin is pardoned, whose nature is renewed, and who has a relish for the enjoyments of heaven. That person is *actually* prepared who knows whom he has believed, who is living near unto God, maintaining intercourse

with heaven by faith and prayer, who is occupying the talents which God hath given him to his glory, and doing the work which God hath assigned him.

Christ says "*Watch* therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come."¹ And again, to the same persons he says: "Be ye also *ready*: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."² This intimates that more is necessary than watchfulness. We wake in vain unless we make ready. We have our Lord to attend, and must be attired—we have a cause to be tried, and must have it ordered—we have a reckoning to make, and must have our accounts prepared—we have an inheritance to receive, and must be meet for it.

"Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." He is the resurrection and the life; and the hour now is, when under the Gospel "the dead shall hear his voice and live." Turn not a deaf ear to his entreating voice, lest he give you up, and say to you, "Sleep on now, and take your rest." Resist not, quench not the motions of the good Spirit of God, lest, grieved and wearied out, he withdraw from you.

Let not the saints sleep as do others. Awake to righteousness. Cast off that sluggishness which may have fallen on your spirits. Carelessness, lukewarmness, and security, are highly unbecoming those who are the people of God and heirs of glory. "Now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light." I do not call on you to entertain or give way to a slavish fear of death; from this Christ died to deliver you. But keep your death in your eye; look it in the face; meditate on it:—and remember that while it is of all things the most certain, yet as to the time of it nothing is more awfully uncertain. Let your loins be girt, and your lamps burning. "For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."³

¹ Mat. xxiv. 32.

² Mat. xxiv. 44.

³ 1 Thes. v. 7, 8, 9.

SERMON XII.

THE FEAR OF DEATH.¹

"And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."—HEB. ii. 15.

THERE may be a tacit allusion in the preceding verse to the deliverance of the Israelites from the danger to which they were exposed on the night before they left Egypt. "Through faith," says the apostle in another place, "Moses kept the passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the first-born should touch them."² The Jews call the angel who went through the land on that fearful occasion, *Samael*, or the Destroyer. That angel had the power of death for a night, and he was prevented, by the appointed means, from touching the first-born of Israel. But the devil has been a murderer from the beginning; and Christ, our passover, not only foiled him by plucking the prey from his teeth, but he destroyed the destroyer—stripped him of his deadly weapons—and caused his power to cease by removing the foundation of it in the expiation of sin: It may be in reference to this event, therefore, that our apostle says, "That through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

The same illusion may be kept up in the words of the text. The children of Israel had been held in a state of grievous oppression by the Egyptians; but previous to their deliverance they were brought into a new species of bondage, through fear of death. In this state of mind must they have continued, more or less, from the time that they heard of the messenger of destruction who was to march through the land. And though God had assured them that he would make a difference between them and the Egyptians, and appointed an ordinance in the observance of which they were to find safety, yet this could not set their minds at rest, especially when the solemn night approached. It was natural for them to fear lest, in consequence of having omitted some of the prescribed rites, or otherwise thrown themselves out of the divine protection, the destroying angel might break in upon them. This apprehension would be increased by the prohibition, "None of you shall go out at the door of his house until the morning,"³ which would

¹ Delivered before the Communion, May 1826.

² Heb. xi. 28.

³ Exod. xii. 22.

sound in their ears like the command which was afterwards so frightful to them, "And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart." But from this fear they were set free. The Lord passed over; the angel of death entered into none of their houses; and the same night put an end both to their mental and their corporeal bondage. This was a great deliverance—it was like life from the dead. The night in which it was wrought was "a night much to be remembered," and was commemorated by the children of Israel throughout their generations. But vastly greater is the deliverance accomplished by the death of Christ. It was in itself but a temporal death which the Israelites dreaded; as sinners we are obnoxious to death eternal. They, through the fear of death, were kept in bondage for a night, or at most a few days; sinners, through the fear of death, are detained all their lifetime subject to bondage.

View the matter in another light. By the passover, the children of Israel were delivered from death only in one form and on one occasion; they were still exposed to its ravages and its alarms. The angel of death hovered around their camp, and fed on the carcasses which fell in the wilderness. His terror overtook them before they had gone far on their journey. "Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?"¹ was their fearful exclamation on finding themselves between the pursuing Egyptians and the Red Sea. And they were haunted by the fears of death during the whole period of their wanderings in the wilderness. "Behold we die," cried they on one occasion; "we perish, we all perish."² And at Mount Sinai, "Let not God speak to us, lest we die."³ Such was the nature of that dispensation, so far as it exhibited the covenant of works. Hence we read of "the covenant from the mount Sinai which gendereth to bondage," in opposition to "Jerusalem which is above, and is free."⁴ Not that we are to suppose, with some, that the church was then under a covenant of works, or that believers were then under the spirit of bondage; but such was the character of the law as threatening death, such the spirit of those who sought life by it; and in its external revelation, in its ordinances of worship, and in the distance at which worshippers were kept, there were so many memorials that atonement was not yet actually made. In this respect it was "the ministration of death and condemnation;"⁵ and it may be in allusion to the effects which it produced on the blinded children of Israel, who "could not look steadfastly to the end of that which is abolished," that the apostle says in the words before us, that Christ hath "delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

But the description in our text is not confined to the ancient Israelites. It portrays the miserable state of those whom Christ came to redeem, and is applicable to all men in their natural condition. As true be-

¹ Exod. xiv. 11.² Num. xvii. 12, 13.³ Exod. xx. 19; comp. ch. xix. 12.⁴ Gal. iv. 24.⁵ 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9, 13.

lievers, though they lived under the law, were pardoned, brought nigh to God, and made spiritually free ; so unbelievers, though they live under the Gospel, are at a distance from God, and “are, through fear of death, all their lifetime subject to bondage.” But from this state the Christian is delivered. To raise your views of the deliverance wrought for us by Christ, and prepare you for commemorating that death by which it was effected, let us consider, in the first place, the description here given of the wretched condition of those whom Christ came to redeem ; and, secondly, their deliverance from it.

I. Consider the wretched condition here described : They “were through fear of death all their lifetime subject to bondage.” Fear is that painful perturbation of mind which is felt at the apprehension of any approaching evil. All the passions, and even the desires, are apt to produce uneasy feelings in the breast. But as the object of desire is something agreeable, its image yields an alleviation to the uneasiness felt, and produces a kind of pleasing tumult ; whereas the object of fear being evil, nothing is presented to the mind under its power but a succession of gloomy and hideous imaginations. Fear is a feeling which is purely painful. And of all the evils of this life, death is the most fearful, and the apprehension of it subjects the soul to a state of the most distressing bondage. Other evils threaten us with the loss of some of our present comforts ; death threatens us with the loss of them all. Other evils may hurt our life ; death destroys it.

There is a fear of death which is natural and unavoidable, springing from the principle of self-preservation which is implanted in all creatures endued with the vital spark. It is nothing more than the love of life manifesting itself in retreating from that which endangers it, and seeking to ward off the blow which aims at its destruction. This feeling is common to all living creatures, rational and irrational ; and among the latter it is felt by the strongest and boldest, as well as the feeble and timid. The lower animals feel it less strongly, in consequence of their views being confined to present things, and their being, in a great measure, free from apprehensions as to the future. Man being endowed with reason, imagination, and foresight, is susceptible of this fear in a stronger degree ; and would accordingly be more miserable than the beasts, provided he had no means of escaping or counterbalancing the evil. The more that any person is sensible of the blessings of life, the more painful must be his apprehensions of death, if he have not the hope that it will usher him into a better state of existence.

But this is by no means the principal light in which the subject is to be viewed, nor that in which it is presented to us in the text. I proceed therefore to observe, that there is a guilty fear of death. By this we do not mean that which is sinful, but that which proceeds from a consciousness of sin. This fear is both an evidence of guilt, and a part of its punishment. Death is not only an evil, it is also a penalty.

"The wages of sin is death." We call death a natural evil, as distinguished from sin, which is a moral evil ; and we speak of a natural death in distinction from a violent one. But, properly speaking, death is not a natural thing ; it is unnatural—a violence done to nature. It is one of the errors of the pestilent system broached by Socinus, that man was created mortal ; and, if I am not mistaken, it was the fountain-error of the system, the venomous egg from which all the rest were hatched. For if man would have died though he had not sinned, then a perfectly just man may die—then there is no need to have recourse to substitution to account for the sufferings of Christ ; and if no atonement, then no need to have recourse to the supposition of his divinity. This, at any rate, is a most dangerous error. It is one of "the depths of Satan"—an after-fetch of the arch-deceiver, since he has been deprived of the power of death. First he said, "Ye shall not surely die, though ye eat." Then, after the sentence took effect, "Ah ! God knew that ye would surely have died at any rate." Oh it fears me, my brethren, that this error prevails extensively in these days of little faith ; not theoretically, but spreading, and creeping, and lurking, like a deceitful cancer, under a fair and florid profession, and eating out the very vitals of Christianity ! It is little less than blasphemy to allege that the work of God, as it came from his hand, tended to corruption—that he made man to be born and die. No : he planted him wholly a right seed ;—if diseases and death sprung up in him, we may be sure that "an enemy hath done this." If Adam had maintained his innocency, he would not have died, and he would not have felt the pangs of the fear of death. This was implied in the threatening. It was only in the way of his eating of the forbidden fruit that he became obnoxious to die. Death was the penalty threatened ; and in consequence of the violation of the precept, it became the punishment inflicted. And no sooner had he sinned, than he fell under the fear of death, and, like a felon conscious of his guilt, he fled from the face of him into whose hand he had forfeited his life. In the same light is death to be viewed as coming on all the posterity of Adam. "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin ; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

In harmony with Scripture, conscience bears witness to this truth. It confirms the judgment of God in his word, and tells men that those who commit such things as are contrary to the law made known to them, "are worthy of death." The mere bodily pain connected with it is not that which makes death so terrible ; for it may sometimes be a deliverance from bodily pain : nor is it the thought of its being an extinction of being ; for, in some cases, that would be a relief to the mind. The real root of this dread is a consciousness of guilt, which produces an apprehension of punishment. This the apostle teaches elsewhere when he says, "The sting of death is sin." What is it that makes a serpent dreadful ? Not its size, or its strength, or its hideous

appearance, but its sting. Take away this, and "the noxious snake" would cease to be an object of horror—we could handle it and look on it with indifference, if not with pleasure. To say to the conscience of a convinced sinner, as was said to David, "The Lord hath put away thy sin," is the same as saying to him, "Thou shalt not die."¹ It extinguishes the fear of death.

This fear is a well-merited punishment—an evil which we have justly incurred, and brought upon ourselves by transgression. The death of a criminal and that of an innocent or good man, may be the very same in their external circumstances; but how different are they in their moral nature, and in the feelings which they produce on the minds of the respective sufferers—the execution, for example, of a traitor and a patriot, of a murderer and a martyr! Both may be tried by the same forms, bound with the same chain, locked up in the same cell, tortured by the same instruments, led to the same scaffold; both may be doomed to the same kind of death, to be hung up, beheaded, drawn and quartered, impaled, or burnt alive. This has been the lot of the best of men, as well as the worst of malefactors. But the former met death without fear, often with exultation, and have been heard singing praises in their prisons and on their scaffolds; while the latter were overwhelmed with shame, confusion, and horror. Why this difference? The former were conscious that they had done nothing worthy of death; the consciences of the latter told them that "they received the due reward of their deeds." And thus it is with sinners who are guilty before God, and have incurred the sentence of death.

We have been speaking of criminals, who fall into the hands of men who shall die themselves, and who can only kill the body; but sin is a capital crime against the living God, who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Death, as threatened in the code of heaven's criminal jurisprudence, means something very different from its legal acceptance among men. In the last sense it is no death compared with the former, and no object of fear. "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul."² If the curse of the law of God were exhausted by natural dissolution, and sin exposed to nothing more than the extinction of animal life and the separation of the soul from the body, there would be no such great reason for apprehension. But conscience, when it is not stupified or its voice smothered, conspires with Scripture in testifying aloud that this is not the case—that there is a hereafter—that the soul does not cease to live when the body ceases to breathe—that the spirit appears before the bar of a just and holy God, and has sentence passed upon it according to the deeds done in the flesh. The heathen had a deep conviction of this. They had their Tartarus, or hell, and their Rhadamanthus, or judge before whom departed spirits appeared; and although superstition mixed up its dreams, yet conscience was to be heard speaking through these dreams; and the work-

¹ 2 Sam. xii. 13.² Mat. x. 28.

ings and the expression of their terrors were like the startings and the monologue of a murderer in his sleep—proclaiming the apprehensions, which haunted him during his waking hours, of falling into the hands of justice, and demonstrating his guilt, though more incoherently, yet no less convincingly, than the judicial evidence that may be afterwards led against him on his trial. Revelation, while it more clearly reveals our duty, has also lifted up the veil which covers the invisible world, and disclosed to sinners the punishment which awaits them there. It declares that “the soul that sinneth”—the *soul* is the sinner—“it shall die.” It denounces “indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil.” And the prospect it presents to all that know not God and obey not the Gospel is “a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries”—that the dead, small and great, shall be raised and appear before the judgment-seat—that the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, and shall have their portion with the devil and his angels, in that place where “their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched.”

Let these things, which are the true and faithful sayings of God, be believed, and “the sinners in Zion will be afraid, and fearfulness will surprise the hypocrite, like a woman in travail.” Let them realise these things, and they will feel what it is to be “in bondage” through the fear of death. When a man is in a passion, we say he is not master of himself—he is a slave for the time to his anger. All the passions have the effect of enslaving those who yield to them; but none of them have such a power over the mind as fear when it rises to a height. Hence the common expression applied, justly and almost exclusively, to this emotion, *slavish fear*—a fear which makes slaves of us. We do not speak of *slavish love*, or *anger*; to these passions we pay a voluntary homage, by wilfully indulging them. But “of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage.” Fear unmans the person. It locks up all the senses—it paralyses both body and soul; so that the person cannot flee from danger, cannot move an arm in his own defence; can neither speak, nor hear, nor see. No prison, no guards, no bars, no bolts, no chains which a tyrant can invent or employ, are so efficient as fear. This is the adamant chain with which God has bound the devils, and in which he reserves them unto the judgment of the great day. O how easy for Him to put this hook into the nose, and this bridle into the jaws, of his proudest and fiercest enemies! He has only to lift himself up—to show himself—to look through the cloud of darkness which is on their minds;¹ he need not speak to them with the voice of thunder—he has only to whisper into the ear of conscience, “I am the Lord; it is I!” and instantly their hearts quail, their countenances are changed, their thoughts trouble them, the joints of their loins are loosed, and their knees smite one

¹ Exod. xiv. 24.

against another.¹ A Felix, a Herod, a Belshazzar, a Pharaoh, a Cain, are examples of this. Nay, whole hosts have in this manner been discomfited; "the stout-hearted have been spoiled, and none of the men of might have found their hands;" so that "one has chased a thousand, and two put ten thousand to flight;"² yea, "the sound of a shaken leaf has chased them, and they have fled, as fleeing from a sword, and fallen when none pursued."³

But (it may be said) are such fears generally felt by sinners? Do not we see multitudes living at their ease, putting the evil day afar off, enjoying themselves as if they were never to die, or as if there were nought to dread after death? Are there not many persons, giving no evidence of religion, who are fearless of death, and expose themselves to jeopardy every hour? Is it not said of the wicked that "they have no bands in their death," and do they not often depart without any apparent horror or apprehension on their spirits?

There is truth in all this, and I am not unaware of the difficulty which it involves. It must be allowed to be a fact, to a confounding degree, that multitudes speak peace to themselves, though they walk after the imagination of their own hearts. And if the understanding be darkened and perverted, if conscience be "seared as with a hot iron," what can be expected to succeed but a fearless apathy? It may be remarked, however, in the first place, that the hardihood which some display may be traced to fear. They wish to brave out the matter, and affect to despise both death and hell, when in reality they are all their lifetime in bondage through fear of them. It is not always true courage that prompts persons to expose their lives in scenes of peril; in many instances it can be traced to necessity, avarice, a false sense of honour, or, in other words, the dread of the world's laugh, which is in truth the strongest symptom of cowardice. It is the same with the foolhardy sinner. And with respect to the apparent fortitude which some wicked men exhibit on a death-bed, it may be remarked, that fear may sometimes rise so high as to overcome itself, and to produce a species of fearlessness. The timid hind will turn upon her pursuers, and make an obstinate resistance, when she perceives that she can no longer escape. How many instances are there of condemned criminals anticipating the day of their execution! The jailer of Philippi, under the apprehension of the punishment which awaited him for allowing the prisoners to escape, was on the eve of killing himself. Despair, like a parricide, will sometimes destroy the fear which produced it.

In the second place, many plunge into dissipation and profaneness, that they may drown the fears of death, and banish all thoughts of a hereafter. Those who are most courageous over their cups, are often the most dastardly when sober. We have heard of generals who have distributed intoxicating liquors to their troops on the eve of a battle; and certain it is that some of Satan's most determined men are in a

¹ Dan. v. 6.² Deut. xxxii. 30.³ Lev. xxvi. 36.

state of almost continual intoxication. The loud laugh, the noisy revel, the horrid imprecation, the profane and coarse jest at heaven and hell—what are they but the devil's martial music, by which he contrives to put spirit into his faint-hearted troops, and without the aid of which the stoutest of his champions would sometimes lose courage, and drop their weapons in their war against the Almighty? We may trace the secret influence of the same principle in the eager pursuit of the world, exemplified in the conduct of those who haste to be rich, or who greedily surfeit themselves with sensual delights. Like cattle who have broken into a forbidden pasture, from which they know they will be speedily driven, aware that their time is short, afraid that death will overtake them, and having hope only in this life—"Behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen and killing sheep, eating flesh and drinking wine: let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die."¹

Finally, the apathy and composure of those sinners who do not run to this excess of riot, is still irrational; it is a species of sober madness. Whether it spring from pure thoughtlessness and inconsideration, or assume the air of superior wisdom, the possessors of this supposed fortitude are really chargeable with brutish folly. They become fearless, only in proportion as they approach to the rank of the brutes, who fear not death because they are incapable of foreseeing it, and have nothing to look to beyond it. They are driven to death with stupid unconcern, "as an ox goeth to the slaughter," or plunge into it with blindfold impetuosity, "as the horse rusheth into the battle." And as for those would-be wise, who boast that they have risen above the prejudices and fears of the vulgar, what is the amount of their great discovery? Why, one which we should think sufficiently humiliating, and which shows that the wisdom of this world soars only to sink the lower—that all men, and they among the rest, "perish like beasts, and are laid in the grave like sheep;" or, as the wise king expressed it for them long ago: "As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? How dieth the wise man? as a fool. For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath: so that a man hath no pre-eminence above a beast."² There lies the pride of modern philosophy! "How art thou fallen, O Lucifer, son of the morning!" "Ah, his glory!" To divest himself of the fear of God and of an hereafter, man, proud man, will be contented to die like an ox, and to be "buried with the burial of an ass!"³

But is it always so? Are ungodly men, small or great, always able to meet the King of Terrors with an undismayed heart? Far from it. There are well authenticated and undeniable proofs to the contrary. There are instances innumerable in which all the dreams of superstition, the flatteries of friends, and the various appliances to which men have

¹ Isa. xxii. 13.² Eccles. ii. 15. 16; iii. 19.³ Jer. xxii. 18, 19.

resorted to ward off the thoughts of death, have failed in the trying hour to pacify conscience, and the death-bed of the sinner has presented a scene of the most harrowing description. And if the curtains of the sick-bed were drawn, if the friendly guards were removed, and we were permitted to receive the dying confessions of those who have lived without God in the world, we could produce more numerous examples. Certain it is that the most careless and undaunted of the votaries of sin have their moments of alarm, indicating too surely the state of bondage in which they are held. That man cannot be said to be, for a single hour of his lifetime, free from the fear of death, who is liable every moment to be seized with terror at its approach, to startle at its shadow whenever it crosses his path, and to be filled with consternation when it overtakes him. In him the curse has truly taken effect, "Thy life shall hang in doubt before thee; and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life."¹

II. Of the deliverance from this misery. "Through death," *i. e.* his own dying, "he delivered" or ransomed "them who, through fear of death, were all their life subject to bondage." On this part of the subject we shall not at present dwell particularly.

The deliverance is twofold—from death itself, and from the fear of death, through which sinners are kept in bondage. It was the promise of Christ, "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction."² But this could not be effected by mere power or force. Sinners were legally and justly doomed to death, and a ransom behoved to be paid to justice. This ransom was the life of the Redeemer. By becoming their surety, assuming their nature, and taking their place, he became obnoxious to death. "The Lord laid on him the iniquities of them all"—inflicted on him the punishment due to them. The death which they had incurred, he endured in all its extent—not merely the separation of soul and body, but the second death. It was not necessary that his punishment, like theirs, should be eternal, because his sufferings and death had an infinite value in them, arising from the divinity of his person. But the cup put into his hand, and which he drank, had all the essential ingredients of that which was prepared for them. Accordingly, he suffered in his soul, not only from the malice of men and devils, but by the hand of his Father, as a righteous Judge, pressing sore on him. He fell under the fear of death, and was bound with its cords, though it could not make a slave of him, nor reduce him to despair. "In the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared."³ In the prospect of his death, "he began to be sore amazed and to be very heavy," and cried

¹ Deut. xxviii. 66.

² Hos. xiii. 14.

³ Heb. v. 7.

out, "Now is my soul troubled ; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." He not only suffered from the terrors of death, but endured its stroke. And by dying he satisfied divine justice, expiated sin, and obtained eternal redemption for his people. Meritoriously he perfected their deliverance on the cross ; and this was judicially declared by his resurrection from the dead, when God loosed the pains of death, and justified him in the Spirit.

By his death, the apostle tells us in the preceding verse, our Lord "destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." All the power which Satan possessed was owing to sin—this was the sceptre of his dominion. By the expiation of sin, Christ undermined the throne of Satan. These words, "It is finished," uttered on the cross, and accompanied by the act which verified them, "bowing his head and giving up the ghost," were like the handwriting on the wall to Belshazzar, *Mene, Tekel*. They carried the sentence of death into the conscience of Satan ; he felt his strength taken from him, his kingdom departed. After this, he had no power by death to injure one of those for whom Christ died. Though allowed to inflict on them the stroke of natural death, still he could not harm them ; for sin being taken away, death becomes powerless, as a venomous creature which has lost its sting. The seed of the woman hath bruised the head of the serpent. Strange victory ! Wonderful deliverance ! Who could have supposed that any person would have destroyed the power of death by becoming its prey ? There have been many instances of combatants wresting from an enemy his weapon, and by means of it inflicting on him a deadly blow ; but when was it heard that a person killed his enemy by receiving the death-blow himself ? Christ was vulnerable only in the heel of his humanity. Satan saw this, and, aiming the stroke successfully, brought him to the dust of death ; but that fall proved fatal to himself !

Now, this redemption is applied to sinners in the day of believing, when they are justified or legally acquitted. Then they are actually set free from the sentence of condemnation, and adjudged to life. "He that believeth on the Son of God shall have everlasting life, and shall never come into condemnation, but hath passed from death unto life." And while, through the death of Christ, they are delivered from the penal consequences of death,—through faith in his death they are set free from the fear of death, and from the bondage which it engenders. God, who sent his Son to redeem them from the curse of the law, sends the Spirit of his Son into their hearts, enabling them to approach him as a reconciled God, with the fearless confidence of children. They "have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father." Thus are they brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and, amidst all their tribulations, are made to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. They have

still to endure the external stroke of temporal death, but its "bitterness is past," or rather it is extracted by their Redeemer. Its moral nature is altered. It comes to them in the channel, not of the old, but of the new covenant—not as a curse, but as a blessing. They are exalted above the slavish dread of the last enemy, and are enabled to raise the song of triumph, even before the victory is achieved, "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but thanks be unto God, which giveth us the victory, through Jesus Christ, our Lord!"

Perhaps it may appear strange that I should have insisted so long on the first part of my subject, and so as to abridge the time due to the second part, which is of greater importance in itself, and much more agreeable. But I have my reasons for this, both general and particular. Suffice it to say at present, that to those who have never felt aright the misery which we have been describing, the Gospel will not be glad tidings. Though all unrenewed men are subject to the fear of death, and are kept in bondage through it all their lifetime, yet such is the fallacious and hardening nature of sin, that it prevents them from realising the full extent of their misery and danger, and lulls them into a temporary security, disturbed only by vague and undefined alarms. There is, therefore, a salutary fear of death, which it is one design of revelation to awaken in the breasts of sinners, and without which they would never be induced to flee for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before them in the Gospel. For this purpose does the law of God unfold to us our real condition as sinners, and discover to us the miserable bondage in which we are held, by revealing to us "the terrors of the Lord." If the sorrows of death have not compassed you, if the pains of hell never got hold of you, so as to make you sensible of this bondage, you can feel no interest in the salvation which the Gospel reveals. This is one great reason why we ministers labour in vain, and our report is believed by so few. We preach Christ to you—we tell you of his incarnation, of his gracious errand, his sorrowful life, his accursed death. You hear all this, you allow it to be true: you feel obliged to so benevolent a friend, and desirous to testify some gratitude to him. We tell you farther that this person was the Son of God, the Maker of heaven and earth, and yet he humbled himself, and paid for our redemption a price of infinite value—the blood of God. This throws an air of mysterious solemnity over the theme, and converts your gratitude into astonishment. But is this the faith of the Gospel? Is this gladly to receive the word? Is there anything here corresponding to the avidity with which the thirsty soul comes to the cooling spring? with which the captive hears the proclamation of liberty? with which the man-slayer, pursued by the avenger, fled to the city of refuge?

If, however, we can once succeed in convincing men of their sin and

danger, in fixing the sentence of death within their consciences, and in making them cry out, under a sense of their guilt and apprehension of future wrath, "What must we do to be saved?" our work is half done. When the arrows of the Almighty have entered their soul, and the poison thereof has drank up their spirits, O how ardently does the parched conscience pant for the refreshing tidings of pardon! How eager to receive the proffered cup of salvation, yea, to snatch it, ere it be half filled, from the hands of the administrator!

SERMON XIII.

THE DEATH OF THE RIGHTEOUS.

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."—

NUMB. xxiii. 10.

THERE are two things which, provided we could establish them on good evidence, would go far, with all considerate minds, to settle the question as to the value of practical godliness. The one is the pleasure which it yields during life, and the other the advantages which accrue from it at death. Now I know not more competent and unexceptionable witnesses to the former than the persons who have led a godly life; and if you were to take their solemn depositions on their death-bed, though some of them might be disposed to express themselves with great diffidence as to their future prospects, yet you would find all of them ready to bear witness that the happiest hours which they spent on earth were those which they devoted to religion; and that their only regret was that the things of God and eternity had not occupied more of their time and attention. Thus far "wisdom is justified of her children." And with respect to the second point—the advantages of religion in death—can you, my brethren, direct me to a witness more worthy of credit than an ungodly man, in the possession of health and the pursuit of riches? Well, then, you have the testimony of such a man in the text, bearing directly on the question, expressed in the most decided manner, and filling up the only blank which the humility or the timidity of some of the former class of witnesses had left in the evidence: "Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

It was God's usual method (and it became him) to convey the knowledge of his will to the church by "holy men." Not that their character constituted the ground on which their messages were to be received; for our faith must rest on the authority of God, and not on the goodness or wisdom of men. But, on the other hand, their good qualities are not to be altogether overlooked. "They believed, and therefore spake." They inquired and searched diligently into the things revealed to them, and imparted them with lively impressions of their truth, necessity, and importance. They staked their own eternal interests upon them. Knowing the terror of the Lord, they persuaded men to

flee from coming wrath, and comforted others with the consolations wherewith they had themselves been comforted. In this respect they added, as it were, their own personal testimony to that of the Spirit of God, under whose inspiration they spake and wrote. But it pleased God, for holy and wise reasons, sometimes to communicate portions of his mind by men of an opposite character ; such as Caiaphas under the New, and Balaam under the Old Testament. The latter seems to have been a man of great gifts, and held in high reputation in his age. He was one of those without the pale of the Israelitish commonwealth, who, as appears from the history of Job, still retained the knowledge of the only true God. But he held the truth in unrighteousness. Knowing God he glorified him not as God, and instead of being thankful for the gifts conferred on him, sought only to make gain of them. His heart was so exercised with covetous practices, that the dumb ass on which he rode rebuked the madness of the prophet, while he ran greedily in the way of error. Permitted by Heaven to visit the king of Moab, under an express injunction to say nothing but what God should bid him, he had recourse to every art of divination and enchantment to procure such a response as would entitle him to the rich presents by which Balak sought to inflame his avarice. Yet into the mind and mouth of this godless man was the Almighty pleased to put his precious word ; and while he prevented it from being corrupted or contaminated in passing through such an impure channel, he glorified himself by constraining one of the greatest adversaries of his people to predict their future felicity, and repeatedly to bless them in the hearing of that prince who had hired him, by the most tempting offers, to devote them to destruction. What has been said of the benediction which Balaam pronounced on the people of Israel, is applicable to his declarations respecting the death of the righteous man. It involves a twofold testimony. We have in it the testimony of the Spirit of God, under whose inspiration he spake for the time. In this view it coincides exactly with the voice which the beloved disciple heard from heaven, saying, "Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord ; yea, saith the Spirit." But we have also the testimony of a man who was himself estranged from the life of God, and an enemy of all righteousness. And you know that a favourable testimony from an enemy is of all others the strongest.

The text is not a mere figurative description of the blessedness of a righteous man's departure. It has a different character from the rest of the inspired oracle. It is "aside" from the prediction. It is more personal than prophetic. It resembles, though breathing a different spirit, the parenthetic exclamation of the dying patriarch, when announcing the fates of his children, "I have waited for thy salvation, O God." It is an ejaculatory prayer, in which the feelings of the man are blended with the raptures of the prophet. Though in a trance, his eyes were open ; the divine afflatus did not suspend his consciousness ;

the prophet felt that he was a man ; and while he described in ecstasy the prospects of the people whose God was Jehovah, and saw that the latter end of the righteous is peace, his heart was delighted, ravished, softened—the fascinations of sin seemed to lose their charm, he felt for the moment as if he could have renounced “the wages of unrighteousness,” and without coming to the choice of suffering affliction with the people of God, he expressed an ardent wish to be numbered with them in their death. Nor, my brethren, was this peculiar to Balaam. There are many instances still of godless men, who in moments of serious thought, and particularly when bending over the sick-bed, or standing at the grave of a saint, breathe the sigh of the text : “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”

Three things claim our attention in the text : there is a comfortable truth held forth—the desirableness of the death of the righteous ; an important caution given us as to our exercise in reference to this ; and a deeply interesting subject of examination as to the character of those whose death is desirable.

I. Of the desirableness of the death of the righteous. Here we shall view the event in the light of God’s word, not confining ourselves to those points which excite the wishes of worldly men, who are strangers to the mystery of that change which death produces on the godly. The Spirit of God intended to lead our minds to prospects beyond those which struck the shortsighted eye of Balaam. On the other hand, we shall confine ourselves to those things which belong to the righteous man’s death as such ; separating whatever may be common to it with that of others, and leaving out of view what may be the peculiar and distinguishing privilege of some saints in their last moments.

It was the contrast between the righteous and wicked at death, which, darting across the mind of Balaam, drew from him the exclamation in the text. But we are not to conceive of this as lying in the external nature or circumstances of the death of the two classes of men. In both it is a disruption of the component parts of human nature ; the soul quits the body, which is laid lifeless in the grave, and becomes the prey of worms. The death of either may be effected by the same diseases or calamities—by a fever, a consumption, or an apoplexy—by a shipwreck, a sudden fall, a stroke of lightning, an earthquake—by the violence of man, or the visitation of God. Nay, the bodily sufferings of the dying saint may be more protracted and agonising than those of the ungodly, who in this sense may be said to “have no bands in their death.” It is in the moral character of the event, and in the relation which it bears to eternity, that the contrast properly consists. If there were nothing after death, as the object of hope or fear, there would be no ground for the wish in our text—no difference between

the death of a righteous and a wicked man, or rather no difference between the death of both and that of a beast ; for it might then be equally said of them all that they are perished and extinct for ever.

“Lazarus died ; the rich man also died and was buried.”¹ Here no difference is to be perceived, or if there be any, it is on the side of the worldly man, who had fared sumptuously during life, and was honoured with a funeral after his demise. But look after them with the eye of faith. “The beggar was carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom ; the rich man lifted up his eyes in hell, being in torments. And beside all this, between them there was a great gulf fixed”—their several states of happiness and misery were irreversibly and unalterably determined for ever. Such is the contrast delineated by the compassionate Saviour of men, delineated parabolically indeed, but in a parable which presents a striking and unexaggerated picture of the awful reality. “Thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and thou art tormented.” “He is comforted !” All the evil things he endured are forgotten, or, if recollected, serve only to enhance his joys. “Thou art tormented !” All thy good things are gone, and the memory of them serves only to aggravate thy misery. From this general description, who can hesitate in his choice between deaths which have such different issues ?

“Now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.” Observe, my brethren, nothing is said of the comfort of Lazarus, or the torment of Dives, on his deathbed. This suggests another point which we mean to set aside in stating the contrast, and in making up our judgment as to the preference.

There are wicked men who have had the flames of hell kindled in their conscience before leaving this world, and have been fearfully distracted in consequence of their sins being set in array before their eyes. But it is a mistake to suppose that they are all the victims of remorse, or filled with terrors at that solemn hour. The hope of the hypocrite usually perisheth at the approach of death ; but even he, though more obnoxious to alarms than the profane, may go down to the pit with a lie in his mouth, and in his right hand, deceiving others, himself deceived. Have you not heard repeatedly of persons whose lives were forfeited to the justice of their country by the commission of the most atrocious crimes, spending the last night of their mortal career in merriment, and conducting themselves on the scaffold with an indifference and levity which was appalling to the spectators ? Many causes may be assigned for that calmness, and even courage, which ungodly men display in their dying moments. Some have seared their consciences by a long course of abandoned living, so that, when they come to die, they are “past feeling.” Others are so fatuously ignorant that they go to an eternal state as a bird hastens to the snare, or an idiot to the correction of the

¹ Luke, xvi. 22.

stocks. Some welcome death as a relief from pain, others are weary of a world which they can no longer enjoy. Some lull themselves asleep with the strong opiate of infidelity, or assume an unnatural hardihood to conceal those misgivings of mind, which, if betrayed, would wound their pride. Nor must we overlook the awful but righteous judgment of the Almighty, by which those who take pleasure in unrighteousness, and love not the truth, are given up to strong delusions to believe a lie—a judgment not more severe on themselves than on those who have imbibed their principles and imitate their example. If men will not believe Moses and the prophets—if they shut their eyes on the clear light in which life and immortality, and judgment to come, are placed by the Gospel of Christ, they shall not have the deathbed repentance and recantations of their associates to arouse them.

On the other hand, though “the latter end of the upright man is peace,” it is not always accompanied with joy and sensible comfort. Blessed be God, the instances have not been rare in every age of righteous men dying not only peaceably, but joyfully and triumphantly. Though far from boasting of their own righteousness, or relying on it as any part of their title to heaven, yet by a diligent and patient continuance in well-doing, they made their calling and election sure. Knowing whom they have believed, and persuaded that he is able to keep what they have committed to him, their conscience bearing them witness that with godly sincerity they have endeavoured to keep the faith intrusted to them, and having the earnest of the Spirit, they look forward with humble but joyful confidence to the gracious reward which he hath promised. Having weathered the storms and escaped the perils of their spiritual voyage, they dismiss their fears at the end of their course, summon all that is within them to contemplate the blissful prospect which they are gradually nearing, and spreading the sails of their faith and hope and desire, for the last time, to the heavenly gale before which they are borne, enter the haven of eternal rest, with shoutings of “Grace, grace, unto it !”

But this is not always the attainment of the genuine saint. The unexpected approach of the householder may throw into confusion and alarm the faithful steward, who is conscious that everything is not in that state of order and preparation which he could have wished ; and even the kind assurances of the Master that he is pleased, and takes the will for the deed, may fail for a time to soothe the disturbed feelings of the anxious servant. The believer may be overtaken by death at a time when his views of an interest in Christ, and his prospects of eternity, are far from being clear and satisfactory. Involved in a multiplicity of cares, and distracted with public business, he has not found leisure to set his heart and house in order ; so that, on receiving the intimation, “Thou shalt die, and not live,” he may, like Hezekiah, “turn his face toward the wall, and weep sore.”¹ Disinterestedly set on the comple-

¹ Isaiah, xxxviii. 1—3.

tion of the good work which he has been honoured to advance, he may beseech the Lord to permit him to see the establishment of Israel in peace, and accordingly feel dispirited at the frown with which he is answered: "Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto me of this matter."¹ From these and other causes—from constitutional timidity of spirit, increased by the peculiar nature of the disease under which he labours—from humility and tenderness of conscience, combined with weakness of faith and knowledge, disposing him to dwell more on the evil of sin and the awfulness of judgment, than on the mercy of God and the character of him who is the appointed Judge—in fine, from the sovereign withholding, for wise reasons, of those supernatural influences which are requisite to give consolation in the last struggle, the genuine Christian may be in heaviness on a sick-bed, and depart at last in fear, or with trembling hope.

But even when presented in these lights, there is a wide and essential difference between the death of the righteous and the wicked. What considerate and impartial person, who knew the lives and saw the end of both, would not dread the death of the latter with all its fortitude, and covet the death of the former with all its faintings and fears? There is something ominous in the calm—something fearful in the fearlessness of an ungodly man while standing on the verge of eternity. It is "an awful pause, prophetic of his end,"—like the breathless silence which precedes the bursting of a thunder-cloud, or the interval of ease enjoyed by a patient, which is mistaken by his friends for a sign of convalescence, but indicates to the skilful physician that a deadly mortification has commenced. On the other hand, there is something hopeful in the fears of the tender-hearted Christian when about to put off this mortal flesh. They betoken the soundness of his conscience and the strength of his humility—that he is alive to his all-important situation, and afraid of deceiving himself—that he is in earnest about salvation, and penetrated with the belief that "without holiness no man shall see the Lord." The most intrepid and confirmed unbeliever would exchange his hope of future happiness or of rest in eternal sleep for the enjoyment of a few more years on earth; the weakest Christian would not yield up his trembling hopes of heaven for a thousand lives and a thousand worlds.

Let me add a few reasons which show that the death of the righteous is desirable.

1. It is safe. This alone is enough to make it desirable. Death is no common or despicable thing. It is a great evil, and in itself an object both of aversion and dread. It is the wages of sin, and on that account not only unnatural, but penal. There is a first and a second death, and the one introduces to the other. "Behold a pale horse, and his name that sat on him was Death, and hell followed with him."² He is the King of Terrors, and the apprehension of meeting him at every

¹ Deut. iii. 26.

² Rev. vi. 8.

turn, and in every affliction, keeps men all their lifetime subject to bondage. But so far as the righteous are concerned, death is stripped of its terrors, because it has been deprived of its power to destroy or hurt them. As guilty, they were once obnoxious to its penalty ; but their guilt has been taken away, and they have been acquitted at the bar of God through faith in the blood of Christ. They cannot be hurt of the second death ; and the first death, under a supernatural ordination, comes to them, not as the executioner of the law, but as the messenger of grace to convey them to heaven. Its appearance may be formidable, and a chilly horror may be felt as it throws its snaky folds round them and seeks the heart ; but its bite is harmless, like that of a serpent which has been deprived of its sting. "The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law ; but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ," who, by fulfilling the law in our stead, has rendered sin powerless and death innocuous. "Whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die." Death is no death to a Christian. "Hast thou found me, O mine enemy !" is the exclamation of a wicked man, on meeting what it has been his great object through life to avoid. The saint, when he finds himself in its cold grasp, can look up and say with a faint smile, what he will afterwards shout in full triumph, "O death, where is thy sting ?" On the ungodly and wicked, death's dart inflicts an incurable—an immortal wound ; for "their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched : " on the Christian it inflicts at the worst a mortal wound which shall soon be healed, for in his case "this mortal shall put on immortality."

2. The death of the righteous is advantageous. Every saint may adopt the words of the apostle, "To me to die is gain."

Death puts an end for ever to all the evils which he endured here—to all his labours and toils—his sickness and sorrow—his infirmities and burdens—his disappointments and fears—his complaints and crosses and conflicts. In the land to which it conveys him, the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick—he shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more—the sun shall not scorch him by day, and there is no night there—there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain ; for the former things are passed away. How welcome is "tired nature's sweet restorer" to the labourer after the toils of a long day ! How refreshing is sleep to the sick man who has been long tossed on his bed under the influence of the burning fever ! But O sweeter and more welcome far is the grave to him who, after many years of suffering and grief, falls asleep in Jesus ! "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," and "he doth well." "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord ; for they rest from their labours." "They enter into peace ; they rest in their beds." And O how refreshed shall they awake from their repose on the morning of the resurrection !

But this is not all—death puts an end to their sinning, as well as suffering, and introduces them into a state of perfect holiness. Sin

dwelling in him is the great burden of the true Christian : its oppression extorts from him his deepest groans. As long as he is here he carries about "the body of this death," crucified indeed, but still living ; dying, yet oft reviving ; causing him to move heavily and halting, giving advantage to his spiritual enemies, distracting him in duty, marring his peace and comfort and communion with God. But now he is completely relieved from the burden and bondage of corruption. The iniquities of the ungodly lie down with them in the grave, and are the cords which bind them till the judgment of the great day. But the dying Christian leaves all his sins, and all of sin, behind him. Death strikes the final blow at the root of his corruptions ; it breaks the last tie between sin and his soul. He shall never more feel the rising of an evil affection ; he shall not again know "the thought of foolishness ;" nor shall temptation ever throw its distracting shade across his mind for a single moment.

3. The dying saint has no reason to regret anything that he is about to leave behind him. The advantages which accrue from earthly changes are usually counterbalanced by privations. A person obtains a lucrative and honourable post, but it requires him to quit his native country, his parents and dear friends, and to spend his life among foreigners of a strange language, and manners dissimilar to his own. On these accounts he sets out with reluctance, and often looks back with a sigh. The advantages which accrue from a Christian's death have no such counterbalance.

The world fills the hearts of the ungodly. It is their portion and treasure ; all their happiness lies in the enjoyment of it. They are of the world ; they speak of it, they think of it, they savour it, and nothing else. Death cannot, therefore, but be dreadful to them ; for it tears them from all that is dear, desirable, and precious in their eyes, and hurries them into another world, of which they have no knowledge, and for which they have no desire nor preparation, except what lies in their sins, by which they have fitted themselves for destruction, as fuel for the fire. But it is quite otherwise with the believer in Christ. He has been crucified to the world, and the world to him. He sits loose in his affections to it. He passes through it as a pilgrim and stranger. When living under its smiles, and enjoying a large share of its good things, he rejects it as his portion, and is disposed to say, "I would not live always here." He desires a better country. What is most valuable in his eyes he has sent before him, and therefore feels it easy to follow. His treasure is in heaven, there the better part of his heart—his desires are also ; the remainder is kept down chiefly by its connection with the body, and this being extricated by the hand of death, he soars to his native element. He dies willingly. He puts off this tabernacle. He is not driven or dragged out of the world, but "departs to be with Christ"—leaves the world to go to his Father and his home.

If it cost him a pang of regret (as it sometimes does) to part with his

earthly relations, who depend on him, and to whom he is tenderly attached, faith overcomes this at the last, and he leaves his fatherless children, his widow, and other friends, to the care of the Angel who redeemed him from all evil, and fed him all his life long. His friends in Christ he knows shall soon follow him. On his deathbed he is sometimes able to speak comfortably to them, by expressing his assurance, not only as to his own personal happiness, but as to the appearance which God will make in behalf of his church on earth: "I die, but God will surely visit you." He does not need to regret his leaving those ordinances which were the most delightful to him here; for the fruit of the vine, which was sweet to his taste at a communion-table, he shall "drink new in his Father's kingdom." The society which he enjoyed below he exchanges for far better society above, including, not only all his friends deceased in the Lord, but patriarchs, prophets and apostles, yea, more and better than they; for he goes to join "an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and God, the Judge of all, and the spirits of just men made perfect, and Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant."

Lastly, I cannot say time would fail me (for it would take but a short time to say all I know on the subject), but speech and ideas would fail me, were I to attempt to describe the blessedness of that state into which death ushers the soul of a righteous man, as a sure prelude and earnest of what awaits him in body and soul at the resurrection of the just. O how little do we know of the meaning of the words and figures which the Spirit has employed to help us to form some faint conceptions of this! Who can tell what is included in the immediate, full, and uninterrupted vision and fruition of God—in being ever with the Lord—in knowing even as we are known, and loving as we are loved—in God's wiping away all tears from our eyes—in the Lamb, who is in the midst of the throne, feeding and leading to living fountains of waters—in having faith swallowed up in sight, hope in enjoyment, desire in delight, and the remembrance of all the ills which grieved and vexed and oppressed us here, lost in the overwhelming discovery that they have wrought for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!

Who that considers these things is not ready to exclaim, "Let me die the death of the righteous?" Ah! my brethren, there lies the danger. Who will not say so? Balaam did it. Any ungodly man may do it. Many, many, wish to drink of this cup who never shall taste it—no, not a drop of it to cool their parched tongue.

II. This leads me to the caution administered by the text: for, from whatever motive it was spoken, it was certainly "written for our admonition." I shall comprise what I have to say on this head in two particulars.

1. It is a real wish. It is not words and no more. The speaker

believes—he feels—he feels deeply, that the death of the righteous is desirable. Balaam repeated his wish, “Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his.”

Marvel not at this. All men wish to be happy, and to shun and secure themselves against misery. How much soever they are in love with “sin,” they do not love “the wages of sin.” Man was created for immortality, and there are on his mind traces of his destination which the most wicked and profane cannot entirely erase. The thought of a future world, and a state after death, will intrude unwelcome. Hence anxieties, fears, forebodings. What more natural than to wish to die like those who have spent their life in preparation for eternity! Many who are far from allowing that they are bad men, have a secret consciousness—a latent suspicion, that all things are not right, and as they ought to be. The consciences of worldly men tell them, that however pleasing the life they lead, it is not that which conducts to glory, honour, and immortality. They have their hopes, but the thought of death is sufficient to damp these; their hearts misgive them in their serious moments; and, while rootedly averse to the exercise and enjoyments which characterise the life of the godly man, they would fain exchange lots with him in the end. Perhaps, too, they flatter themselves, that such desires, especially when expressed in prayers, may do something toward the attainment of their object. This is a fond imagination; but what will not a deceitful heart, in love with sin, conceive and bring forth?

2. It is a mere wish, and therefore vain and useless. It has no immediate influence on the life, and can have no remote effect on the death, of the men by whom it is indulged. It leaves the will and affections unchanged, yea, untouched. So far from bringing fruit to perfection, it is barren and fruitless; it does not even put forth the germ of good resolutions. It is dead, being alone.

“Wishing, of all employments, is the worst—
Wishing, that constant hectic of a fool.”¹

What is a wish? An inactive desire. It is the breathing after something desirable, when the means of obtaining it are out of our power, or we feel an invincible repugnance to use them. On both suppositions we make no exertions, and cannot properly be said to have either desires or hopes. We may wish for impossibilities, or what is next to them. A beggar may wish to be a king, but he cannot be said seriously to desire it. The confirmed drunkard, when he sees the advantages of sobriety, or dreads the effects of intemperance on his constitution, may wish for the health and longevity of the sober man, but he cannot properly be said to desire them. There are moral as well as natural impossibilities; and those of the former kind are the greater of the two. The wish in our text may be said to partake of the nature of both. The mendicant

¹ Young's *Night Thoughts*, Night IV.

who goes from door to door, and sitting on a dunghill, feeds on the garbage which the dogs have left, will ascend a throne sooner than the unrighteous man shall inherit the kingdom of heaven, or die the death of the righteous.

To what shall I liken those who trust in this lying refuge? or where shall I find anything which approaches to their infatuation? To go forth to meet the King of Terrors with no other armour of defence besides these fig-leaved wishes, is madness beyond that of the prophet, who, riding on an ass, with a staff in his hand, was blindly rushing on the drawn sword of the angel who guarded the road. During the ages of ignorance and superstition, kings and warriors, who had spent their lives in blood and dissipation, when they found their end approaching, were accustomed to go to a convent, and cause themselves to be dressed in the garb of a monk, imagining that if they died in these holy vestments, their souls would go to Paradise. Even this opinion, of which it is difficult to say whether it be more ridiculous or impious—this attempt to die by benefit of clergy, and to gain admission into heaven by stealth in borrowed garments, is not worse than that which we are opposing. If the death of the righteous were desirable on the ground of anything connected with the external circumstances of their dissolution, or if their happiness after death were independent of their character and internal dispositions, Balaam's wish would not be so preposterous, though it would still be vain and fruitless. But this is not the case. What is it to die the death of the righteous, but to die a righteous man? Were it possible for a wicked man to gain admittance to heaven, he would feel like Doeg among the priests at Nob, detained before the Lord, and like Satan among the sons of God. Heaven would be no heaven to an unholy person: its employments would be a burden, its pleasures a torment; and the presence of God, which is the life of all its blessed inhabitants, death to him.

O then beware of listening to this delusion, or indulging the hopes which it is apt to engender! Take it along with you—lay it to heart, that to have a desirable death you must be righteous. This brings me to the matter of examination which the text presents; or, to speak,

III. Of the character of those whose death is desirable. There are two questions here: Who are the righteous? Am I of the number? We shall endeavour to answer the first; let your consciences, as we proceed, reply to the second.

"There is none righteous, no, not one." None are less disposed to dispute this humbling truth—this levelling doctrine—than those who are righteous, because by the grace of God they are so. They are all ready to acknowledge that they were by nature the children of disobedience and wrath, and to ascribe to the mercy of God the distinction which has been created between them and others of their race. This,

then, is the first mark by which you are to try yourselves. Have you been convinced of sin—brought to see and be affected with your conformity to the holy law of God, in conduct, conversation, and thought? Have you been led to trace all your actual transgressions to the fountain of a heart deceitful and radically corrupted? And have you been persuaded that you were justly obnoxious to the divine displeasure, and lying under a sentence of condemnation, incapable of doing anything for your own relief?

Such as are righteous have received the gift of righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ. This God offers to all freely in the Gospel, and imputes to the believer. On the ground of it he justifies him from all the charges of the law, acquits or declares him righteous. Here is a second mark by which you are to try yourselves. Persuaded that the obedience and death of Christ furnish a righteousness commensurate to all the claims of the holy and violated law, and which God not only approves, but has provided and reveals for the express purpose of justifying the ungodly, have you, under the teaching and influence of the Holy Spirit, fled to it by faith as your refuge and the foundation of your rest? Is it the sole ground of your peace, and hope, and confidence, in the prospect of death, and of appearing before the judgment-seat? Do you renounce all dependence on your own personal merits or goodness? and is it not only your wish, but also your lively and animating desire to be “found in Christ, not having your own righteousness, but that which is of God by faith?”

But all who are righteous in the primary, evangelical sense of the word, are also holy in their dispositions. The relative change made on their state by justification is accompanied by a real change on their hearts, effectuated by divine power through the instrumentality of the word. By means of the light of divine knowledge, which is made to pervade the whole soul, not only are their consciences pacified, but their hearts are purified, rectified, and reduced to a cheerful conformity to the eternal law of righteousness. Examine yourselves by this test. Are your hearts right with God, and sound in his statutes? Do you love him supremely? is it your desire to please him in all things? Do you esteem his commandments concerning all things to be right, and hate every false and wicked way? Have your affections been disengaged from the world, and set on things above, where Christ is?

In fine, the righteous have a holy practice regulated by the moral law. Instead of considering themselves as released by their redemption from any moral duty, they judge that they are laid under new and stronger obligations to holiness in all manner of conversation. “They are righteous before God, walking in all his commandments and ordinances blameless.” Try yourselves by this. Is your obedience universal and unexcepted? Do you exercise yourselves to have consciences void of offence toward God and toward man? “Little children, let no

man deceive you : he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother." In many things you are conscious of offending, but you do not live in the allowed transgression of any divine precept ; you feel that sin dwells in you, and obtains the mastery for a time over the better part of your nature, but you are engaged in a constant warfare against it, abhor yourselves so far as you are involved in its pollutions, and long for the time when you shall be completely set free from its power.

Does your character, gospel hearers, answer in any good degree to the description which has been given ? If not, then you are among the unrighteous ; and you must die *their* death. Yes ; if death overtake you (and it may not be far off)—if it overtake you in this condition, you must "die in your sins ;" and as death leaves, judgment shall find you. When you survey the enclosed field of death, you read many a monumental inscription and epitaph, closed by a text of holy writ ; but there is one text, which would suit them all, and might be written on the gate of every burying-ground : "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still ; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still : he that is righteous, let him be righteous still, and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And behold I come quickly, and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." O beware of that thief of time, and most successful purveyor of hell, procrastination. Reject not, or, which amounts to the same thing, shift not the offers of grace and calls to repentance, which are addressed to you. "Now is the accepted time ; now the day of salvation." The approach of death is not the only thing you have to dread. Before that period arrive God may give you up to a reprobate mind, as a just punishment for your voluntary and self-contracted obstinacy and infatuation. Thus shall you be as to all good hope "dead, while you live—twice dead," like a tree blasted by the bolt of heaven, and plucked up by the roots. "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."¹ There are favourable seasons, which, if misimproved, shall never return. The man who originally uttered the words of the text is an awful instance of this. After being restrained, reproved, enlightened, and favoured with such discoveries of the blessedness of the righteous, as to feel and express the most ardent wishes to "stand in their lot at the end of the days," he relapsed into his former state, became more depraved than ever, "taught Balak to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel,"² and perished in his iniquity.

I repeat it—for gospel hearers do not appear sufficiently aware of the truth—there are to every person under the preaching of the word, and the discipline of Providence, seasons of visitation, which, if misimproved,

¹ Prov. xxix. 1.

² Rev. ii. 14.

will never return—soft moments—times of awakening, enlightening, relenting, when the ears are open to instruction, when conscience speaks and the heart listens, when the stirrings and striving of the Spirit of God are felt, when the vanity of the present world is seen, and the powers of the world to come lay hold on the soul, when Satan is thrown down, and his prisoner, sighing for an unknown liberty, drags in his chains toward the spot on which a great light shines. Thou art not far from the kingdom of God, O sinner! Lift up a prayer: one effort more, and all will be well. Ministers of the gospel, and all who know the value of an immortal soul, help with your prayers! Now he stands on the limit which divides the kingdoms of darkness and light. One foot is on the line, and the other is lifted up, and stands on tiptoe—he hesitates—his resolution fails—he looks behind—the world rushes into his heart—he falls back—devils shout, and angels retire, covering their faces with their wings!

SERMON XIV.

THE SOUL COMMITTED TO CHRIST.

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."—2 TIM. i. 12.

THERE are certain periods in the life of every man, marked by events affecting his happiness, which he can never forget, and on which he cannot reflect without emotions of gratitude and joy. Such, for example, are the periods when he first set out in the world, when he formed a connection for life, or when he was providentially saved from some dangerous distemper or imminent calamity. There are similar periods in the life of every Christian man; as when he first took a seat at the Lord's table, when he was admitted to sensible communion with God in that or any other ordinance, when he was relieved from spiritual distress, or experienced a revival of religion in his soul after a season of deadness and decay. But of all others the most important era in a Christian's life is that at which he was first led and disposed to commit his soul to its Saviour. With respect to other mercies of a spiritual kind, they all take their character from this, and may be traced back to it as their source. But for it they never would have been, and by it they are what they are. Nothing is asserted of other seasons like to what is said by Christ of this: "There is joy in heaven in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth;"—joy that a soul has been saved from death, that a multitude of sins has been covered, that a brand has been plucked from the fire and converted into a luminary which, after lighting many on the way to heaven, shall itself shine as a star in the firmament for ever and ever. And with respect to external mercies of which a Christian may have been a partaker, the greatest of them only marks an era in his temporal existence, whereas his conversion to God through Christ marks an era in eternity, inasmuch as it produces a change upon him which draws after it his eternal felicity. Other events which have befallen him, how joyful soever in themselves, may have led to or been followed by distressing results, so that the recollection of them excites pain rather than pleasure. The Lord who gave may have taken away. But here is an event which is a source of unmingled joy, and on which we may continue to reflect with growing satisfaction and delight. We may find

reason to repent of the confidence which we have placed in the best of our fellow-creatures. The person to whose care we had intrusted our most valuable property, perhaps our all in the world, may prove unfaithful or unfortunate, and in consequence of this we may be ruined or reduced to beggary. But there is no danger of anything like this happening to the Christian, who may say boldly, and at all times, with the apostle in the text, "I know whom I have believed," or trusted, "and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

There are two things in these words : first, what he had done, and secondly, his persuasion in reference to it. He had believed a certain person, and had committed or intrusted something to him. He does not name either the trustee or the trust, the depository or the deposit. It was unnecessary for him to mention them in writing to his son Timothy, nor is it necessary to be more specific in addressing Christians. "He whom I have believed," and "that which I have committed to him," are more familiar than household words—they are heart-words, with all who have been taught of God and made wise to salvation. "Whom, having not seen, they love, in whom, though now they see him not, yet believing they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory," in the hope of "receiving the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls," which they have committed to him against the day of his second and glorious appearance. Happy they who have adopted this wise course ! All that is precious and dear to them is in safe keeping and sure preservation ; and as they have the highest security for it, so they may be at perfect ease amidst all the vicissitudes of life—at losses, privations and troubles—at death, and in prospect of the judgment. As a person whose capital is invested beyond all ordinary possibility of risk and at good interest, hears, during a season of national distress, of fortunes wrecked and families ruined, without any other feeling than pity for the sufferers, and secured against want himself, ungrudgingly "disperses abroad and gives to the poor ;" so the believing and assured Christian is "not afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord ;" having always all sufficiency in all things, he may "abound to every good work ;" and "being comforted in all his tribulation, he is able to comfort them who are in any trouble by the comfort wherewith he himself is comforted of God."

We shall, *first*, consider the act of committing the soul to our Lord Jesus Christ, which may be useful not only in helping the believer to review his former deed, but also in exciting the sinner to take the same course. And, *secondly*, we shall consider the persuasion which the believer may have of the safety of his eternal interests in the hands of the Redeemer.

I. In the first place, the believer commits his soul to Christ under a deep impression of its inestimable value. There are some even in places

favoured with the light of revelation, who do not appear so much as to know or believe that they have souls. They are like the heir to a great estate or a kingdom, who, having been brought up in profound ignorance of his birth, associates with the lowest company, and addicts himself to the most ignoble occupations, grovelling pursuits and amusements ; or like the heaven-struck monarch of Babylon, whose "heart was changed from man's, and a beast's heart was given unto him." O what little value do the greater part of men set on their souls ! And at what a vile price are they willing to sell them ! All their time and attention are devoted to making provision for the flesh—preserving, satisfying, dressing, and displaying the body. Provided it be well with their bodies, they care not how it fare with their souls—though they be naked, famishing, diseased, dying, dead in trespasses and sins.

How irrational and unnatural is such conduct ! Is it necessary seriously to expose it ? The body, though "fearfully and wonderfully made," was constructed of earthy materials, and will return and be resolved into its original dust. The soul is an immaterial and spiritual substance, simple and uncompounded, and formed for immortality. By the former we are akin to the beasts that perish ; by the latter we are allied to angels and the God that made us. It is the soul that thinks, understands, judges, discerns between truth and falsehood, between right and wrong, remembers the past, and penetrates into the future, traces effects to their causes, from the most obvious and near to the great first cause, and is the seat of all the affections, social, moral, and religious. It was created at first after the image of its Almighty Maker, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness ; and though sin has despoiled it of its moral beauty and impaired its intellectual vigour, yet it still exhibits the remains of its pristine grandeur, like a defaced picture or a palace in ruins. And it is capable of having the divine image reinstamped upon it. The soul, and not the body, is the proper subject of happiness or misery ; and can there be a more arresting thought than this, that it must be either happy or miserable through an endless existence ? The soul is the man, the body only its temporary habitation. The soul is the jewel, the body only the casket in which it is deposited ; and as the casket is frail, and ready every moment to fall in pieces, it concerns us greatly to commit the jewel to one who is able to keep it. "What is a man profited, if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul ? Or, what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ?" This truth flashes conviction into the mind of the sinner at the moment that he believes on Christ. "The redemption of the soul is precious." "O let my soul live !"

2. The believer commits his soul to Christ under a conviction of its danger. He is not only intimately persuaded of its value, he is also strongly impressed with a sense of its great and imminent danger of perishing. He perceives that it "stands in jeopardy every hour," so long as it remains in its present state. He is convinced of the evil of

sin—of its God-provoking, soul-ruining nature. He hears the sentence which has gone forth from the lips of the Judge, “The soul that sinneth shall die :” conscience tells him that his has incurred that sentence ; he feels that it has already taken hold of him in spiritual death, or the alienation of his heart from all that is divinely good ; and he dreads its full execution in the second death, or an entire and eternal separation from the fountain of goodness. O that such impressions were more common among the hearers of the word ! A sense of danger naturally produces a desire to escape from it ; though a supernatural communication of light and power is required to show a man the true way, and to determine him to take it. The convinced sinner looks around him for safety, and the anxious inquiry is heard, What must I do ? “What ails thee, distracted man ? Thou art in health, thou hast every worldly comfort, all thy friends are about thee. Whom or what seekest thou ?” “One to whom I may commit my guilty, perishing soul. A place where I may be safe from the wrath to come.” Thus is he shut up to the way of faith which the Gospel reveals. As in an inundation, when the increasing waters threaten to sweep everything before them, the affrighted inhabitants betake themselves, with their most valuable goods, to some high place, so does the alarmed and enlightened sinner hasten to commit himself to Christ, as a refuge from the storm, and a covert from the tempest. “O that I had the wings of a dove !” “Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves to their windows ?” These are they that have been warned to flee from the wrath to come.

3. The believer commits his soul to Christ under the thorough persuasion that he is unable to keep it himself. No man will intrust that which is precious in his eyes to another, so long as he deems it perfectly safe in his own hands. Every man is the natural guardian of his own soul ; and had he not lost the ability of preserving it which he originally possessed, he would never have been required or exhorted to commit it to any other. It was this inability on our part which rendered the interposition of a Mediator and Redeemer necessary. “When we were without strength, Christ died for the ungodly ; and what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God” accomplished by “sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.” What is it that keeps so many at a distance from the Saviour whom God hath provided, and prevents them from intrusting him with their eternal interests ? Want of a thorough and practical belief of the Scripture doctrine of man’s fallen state, and its fatal consequences, legally in exposing him to the judicial displeasure of Heaven, and spiritually in indisposing him to all that is morally good and acceptable in the sight of God. “They being ignorant of God’s righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.” Arminianism is the offspring of ignorance and pride ; ignorance of the extent of our misery, and a proud aversion to be indebted to another for that which we are utterly unable to do for ourselves. It

existed as an operating principle long before it entered into a body of divinity. It is much older than the individual who in the seventeenth century gave it a name among Protestants. It is the doctrine of Popery, rendered more seductive by its refinement from superstition; it is the old error of Judaism somewhat Christianised; it is the natural religion of fallen man. God found it necessary to place cherubim and a flaming sword which turned every way to guard the tree of life, and to prevent Adam from presumptuously seeking life in that garden in which he had forfeited the blessing. And nothing but the sword of the law-curse, suspended from heaven and flaming on their consciences, will deter the posterity of Adam from seeking salvation by that covenant which was originally "ordained unto life," but which now "worketh wrath."¹ We must have "the sentence of death in ourselves that we should not trust in ourselves," before we will "trust in God who raiseth the dead."² The person who speaks in our text was a memorable example of this. He "was alive without the law once," and, a stranger to its spirituality, thought himself blameless touching its righteousness. With these views he not only saw nothing desirable in Jesus of Nazareth, but judged that he ought to do many things contrary to his name, and reviled him as the enemy of the law and the minister of sin. But the light which shone upon him on the road to Damascus dispelled this fond delusion. And what a discovery did he make! The righteous man turned out to be the chief of sinners; the wisdom on which he plumed himself, arrant folly; his zeal for God, mad rage against the Lord and his anointed; and his soul, which he fondly imagined to be decked with "fine linen, clean and white, even the righteousness of saints," he now saw to be covered with rags, which, instead of adorning it, only added to its deformity. Then, says he, "What things were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ; yea doubtless I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, that I may win Christ and be found in him."

The person who has been made to know himself would not trust himself with his own salvation for a single moment. Though the Saviour were to take his soul into his hands, and offer to give it back "washed and sanctified, and justified," he would humbly refuse the offer. Though he were to present it as pure and upright as was that soul which the Almighty breathed into the body which had been just moulded by his own fingers, the enhanced value of the gift would heighten the dread of the responsibility, and the Christian would commit himself anew to the Redeemer, saying, "Preserve my soul, for I am holy." He remembers Adam his father, and Eve that bare him, and he shudders when he thinks of the issue of their being "left to the freedom of their own will," and the breach of that trust which was rendered awfully sacred by its involving the fate of millions unborn. Knowing this, the believer commits himself to Christ for all and for ever.

¹ Rom. vii. 10; iv. 15.

² 2 Cor. i. 9.

4. This is done in the confidence that Christ is willing to undertake and able to keep the trust. Benhadad, in his extremity, committed himself to Ahab on the report of his servants: "Peradventure he will save thy life, for we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings."¹ The lepers who were starving at the gate of Samaria were determined to throw themselves into the camp of the Syrians, by this reasoning, "If they save us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die."² But no sinner is required to take the important step in the text upon a peradventure, nor from the mere consideration that it cannot be worse with him than it already is. It is no leap in the dark to which the Gospel calls him, no desperate plunge to escape destruction. His eyes are opened; he knows what he is doing; he is persuaded that Christ is "able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him;" and that he is not more able than he is willing. Yes, sinner, you have the surest grounds and the highest encouragements. The person of the Saviour, his office, his qualifications both personal and official, the revealed relation in which he stands to sinners of mankind, his outstretched hands, his entreating voice, the high assurance of heaven, the concurrent and harmonious testimony of all who have trusted him—these are your grounds and encouragements. And are they not sufficient? would you require more? "Behold, now is the accepted time, now the day of salvation! Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden; and I will give you rest. Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. The Spirit and the bride say, Come; let him that heareth say, Come; and whosoever will, let him come. This man receiveth sinners. His name is Jesus; and it is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." What shall we say to these things? "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life."

5. The soul is committed to Christ by an act of faith. The expressions, "I have believed" and "I have committed," are of the same import, and are interchanged by the apostle in describing his exercise. The deposit is not only made believingly, but it is made by believing. This distinction, as it appears to me, is not verbal or trivial, but of great importance in the evangelical system, as serving at once to illustrate the glories of divine grace and to secure the peace and comfort of the convinced sinner. I shall explain my meaning. The sinner may be said to commit his soul to Christ affectionately, penitently, humbly; because the gracious dispositions intimated by these words natively spring from true faith in Christ, invariably accompany, and cannot for a moment be altogether separated from its exercise. But still the soul is not committed to Christ by an act of love, or repentance, or humility, but by an act of faith. The commitment is believing; it is the person's reliance on God's testimony concerning his Son; it is his trusting in Christ for

¹ 1 Kings, xx. 31.² 2 Kings, vii. 4.

his own salvation. Particularly, you are not to confound this commendation of the soul to the Saviour with its dedication to him. All that believe "give their own selves to the Lord."¹ But this is subsequent, in the order of nature, to the act of which we speak, and proceeds upon it according to the nature of evangelical exercise. They are as distinct as the act of a condemned traitor, when he throws himself on the mercy of his prince, and pleads the amnesty which he had published, is from the act of the same individual, when, being pardoned and readmitted to favour, he renews his oath of allegiance. The one is the act of a dying man, the other of a man restored to life; the one is an act of faith or trust, the other an act of homage or obedience. You may trace the difference between them, and also the influence which the one has upon the other, in the exercise of David, as it is beautifully delineated in the hundred and sixteenth Psalm.

6. This commitment is a most comprehensive act. It is so in its subject, which includes spirit, and soul, and body; for, though "the salvation of your souls" is eminently "the end of your faith," Christians, yet are you found "waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of your body." It is also comprehensive in its ends. First and mainly as to the soul; it contemplates pardon and purity, grace and glory, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Let no man be afraid that the sacred cause of holiness will suffer from the doctrine which gives the undivided honour of salvation to the Redeemer of God's election. Who art thou, O man of unclean lips, who drinkest in iniquity like water, that thou shouldst think that thou canst secure the interests of holiness better than the High and Holy One who inhabiteth eternity? The believer is convinced that sin has been his ruin, and he can find comfort only by trusting to him who "saves his people from their sins." He commits his soul to Christ, to be delivered from the wrath to come, and to be delivered from the bondage and pollution of sin, to be sanctified as well as justified, to be made meet for as well as put in possession of the inheritance of the saints in light. And then as to the body: knowing that this integral, though inferior, part of his nature was "bought with a price," the believer has committed it also to Christ, that it may be sustained under infirmities and protected amidst dangers; that it may be preserved from "fleshly lusts which war against the soul;" that, though maimed and mangled by disease or violence, its members which remain may be employed "as instruments of righteousness unto God;" that it may be redeemed from the power of the grave, and may at last be presented faultless and "fashioned like unto His glorious body." In short, the believer confides in the Lord for "an everlasting salvation, comprehending conservation in a state of grace, with all that provision, direction, and comfort which he needs, in travelling through the wilderness of this world to "the better country." His language is, "That which concerneth me the Lord will make perfect."

"The salvation which is in Christ Jesus" is one, though it includes a variety of blessings. The whole is the object of faith. Not that the believer can take it all in at once, or have a distinct apprehension of its several parts; his views gradually enlarge, as he "looks upon the things that are not seen;" new beauties and new blessings arise; but still there is not one of these which he does not recognise as belonging to that salvation which was the object of his faith when he "first trusted in Christ."

Lastly, the believer commits himself to Christ with a view to the day of his second and glorious appearance. This the apostle specifies in the text. Disbelief of a future judgment lurks at the bottom of that indifference which multitudes indulge about their souls; and a habit of putting the day of account far away in their thoughts is one great cause why the hearers of the Gospel procrastinate day after day the great concern of their salvation. Ah! my brethren, if you believed with the heart, as you confess with the mouth, that God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world by that man whom he hath constituted the Saviour of the world, and that he shall come with flaming fire to take vengeance on all who know not God, and obey not the Gospel, you would not give—you would not be able to give sleep to your eyes, or slumber to your eyelids, until you had obtained a saving acquaintance with him whose friendship and favourable recognition will be all in all on that day. The awakened sinner has a deep and realising conviction of these two truths in their indissoluble connection: "It is appointed to men once to die, and after death the judgment." And knowing the terror of the Lord, he is persuaded to "be reconciled to God" by faith in him who was "once offered to bear the sins of many, and who, to them that look for him, will appear the second time without sin unto salvation."

It is one mark of a genuine believer that he loves and looks for the second coming of Christ—he looks forward with hope and desire to that day, the very thought of which is an object of aversion and dismay to others. Why? Just because he hath committed his soul to him against that day, not only to be saved from its terrors, but to be made participant of its joys. That will be the day of accounts, not so properly to the believer, as to Him whom he made his sole trustee and surety, and the result will be equally creditable to the one and profitable to the other. Then will he give a good account of that which was committed to him; and none and nothing shall be lost. With respect to all who were committed to him by his Father, and who were determined by grace to commit themselves to him (and they shall eventually be the same), he will say, "Here am I, and the children who were given me." That is the day in which he will make up his jewels—the day of the manifestation of the sons of God, when the Redeemer shall bring their souls with him from heaven, and call their bodies to him out of the grave, and shall present both faultless before the presence of his glory

with exceeding joy. To this the believer has a respect when he commits himself to Christ, and, in the midst of his severest afflictions, and in the view of death and the grave, exults with an ancient saint, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day on the earth; and though, after my skin, worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God."

Let me add an inference or two from what has been said on this subject.

In the first place, you may see that, though there is no pre-requisite in the sinner as the ground of faith in Christ, yet there are important preparations to the exercise of it. The word of the Gospel concerning the Saviour, together with the call of God to embrace him, is the proper and sole ground of faith, and all are warranted to rely on him, whatever their character is, and whatever their conduct may have been. But there is a knowledge, and there are convictions which are necessarily presupposed in their believing to the saving of the soul. They must know and be convinced that they have souls to be saved—that there is a law which they are under and have transgressed—that they are guilty, and accursed, and depraved, and without strength. They need to be awakened, and alarmed, and convicted. Their false hopes need to be swept away, and their legal pride brought down by exhibitions of the spirituality and extent of the law of God. These things may be effected suddenly, but they *must* be effected; and generally they are effected in a gradual way. Ministers must travail in birth till Christ be formed in their hearers; and it is not every child of the promise that is brought forth by a single pang. The fiery law was given from Mount Sinai before the Gospel was published from Mount Sion. Though the Lord was not in the whirlwind, and fire, and earthquake, yet they were necessary to prepare the prophet for listening to the "still small voice." The ministry of the Baptist preceded that of our Saviour; and the preaching of the law is still necessary in subserviency to the gospel. The Spirit convinces men first of sin, and then of righteousness. The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness, as well as the righteousness which is of God by faith; and he that is not convinced of the former will not believe the latter. Legal doctrine is destructive to souls, because it turns men away from the only Saviour; but there is reason to fear that multitudes have been and are lulled into a false and dangerous security by not having their natural condition laid open, and by not having their attention turned to those things which the Spirit ordinarily blesses as means preparatory to faith.

2. You may perceive that the doctrine which we have been teaching is far from being unfavourable to holiness or good works. They are ignorant of the scriptural doctrine of salvation by faith, and strangers to its influence, who bring this groundless charge against it. Some are afraid that the inculcation of a full confidence in the Saviour will make

men careless about the means of salvation. Not so was the apostle : "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling ; for it is God that worketh in you." Does a man become careless about his money when he has deposited it in the bank ? Does a sick person become careless about his health, when he intrusts his cure to an able physician ? And the more unreserved and implicit the confidence which he places in his skill, will he not be the more careful in using his prescriptions, and complying with his advice ?

"The grace of God which bringeth salvation teacheth" all who embrace it, "to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." I do not say that all who profess this doctrine have been so taught. I know that there are some who pretend a great regard for evangelical truth, who fall far short of others in moral conduct, who are remiss and partial, if not faithless, in the discharge of relative duties, covetous, selfish, unsocial, uncharitable. Such are the characters of whom Paul could not speak but in tears : "Enemies to the cross of Christ," though they profess to be its friends, "who mind earthly things, whose God is their belly, and whose end is destruction." Such also are the professors of whom the apostle James speaks, or rather whom he repudiates : "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say that he hath faith, and hath not works ? Can faith save him ? Even so faith, if it have not works, is dead, being alone." Remember that there is a wide and essential difference between being justified *by faith only*, and justified *by that faith which is alone*. True and saving faith is never alone ; it worketh by love—by love to God, which is evinced by keeping his commandments, and by love to our fellow-creatures, which is shown by doing them good as we have opportunity.

There are two sayings which the apostle lays down as equally true, and charges ministers to inculcate in their preaching. The one is immediately addressed to all the hearers of the Gospel : "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners."¹

The second, which is like unto it, is addressed to believers : "This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly ; that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works."²

¹ 1 Tim. i. 15.

² Titus, iii. 8.

SERMON XV.

ASSURANCE.

"I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."—2 TIM. i. 12.

HAVING considered, in the former discourse, the exercise of the sinner in committing his soul to Christ, I now proceed to speak of the persuasion which the believer has of the safety of his deposit. "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day;" *i. e.* I am assured of the safety of my soul in his hands, or that I shall be saved in the day of his glorious appearing. Let us then endeavour to open up the nature, grounds, and effects of a scriptural assurance of complete and final salvation.

I begin with premising that this assurance is no apostolical gift, or extraordinary attainment, confined to the first age of the Gospel, or to a favoured class of Christians. Judas, though an apostle, did not possess it: and Paul never speaks of it as a privilege of office, or an effect of inspiration. He does not say on this as he says on another subject, "Am I not an apostle? have not I seen the Lord?" He does not "come to visions and revelations of the Lord," he does not speak as one "caught up to the third heavens;" for he knew that he might have enjoyed all these privileges, and yet "be a castaway." It was as a sinner—the "chief of sinners," that he committed his soul to Christ: and it is as a believer, and on grounds common to all believers in every age, that he expresses the persuasion in the text. What he here avows as an individual he elsewhere expresses in the name of all believers: "We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God." And all the saints at Rome he associates with himself in that triumphant passage: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? I am persuaded that neither life nor death, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." God forbid that we should cut off the streams of Christian consolation, and dry up the most fertile source of Christian holiness, by confining this attainment either to apostolical men, or to the primitive Christians. This were not to "follow their faith, considering the end of their conversation, Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever." Their minds

might be more deeply imbued with the Spirit of truth ; but we having the same Spirit of faith, according as it is written, " I have believed, and therefore have I spoken ;" we may believe, and so speak. Every believer in Christ possesses this persuasion in some degree, and may attain to the full assurance of understanding, and faith, and hope.

The inquiry is of no minor importance in itself, and it claims particular attention at present, when a disposition is evinced to run to opposite extremes as to the doctrine of Christian assurance. What I have to advance will fall in under the illustration of the following propositions,—that it is an intelligent and enlightened persuasion ; that it rests on the surest grounds, as laid down in the word of God ; that it is strengthened by Christian experience ; that it will stand the severest test ; and that it exerts a powerful and extensive influence on the Christian life.

I. It is an intelligent and enlightened persuasion. " I know—and am persuaded," says the apostle. How and whence he knew this, will afterwards be noticed ; in the mean time, it is proper to observe at the very outset, that he bases his persuasion on knowledge. What is said of it in all the riches of its full-grown strength, is true of it in its greenest and least advanced state—it is the " assurance of understanding." It differs essentially and totally from all blind impulses, all enthusiastic imaginations, all sudden impressions made on the mind, but of which the person can give no intelligent or satisfactory account. It is not the result of dreams or visions. It is not produced by immediate suggestions of the Spirit. It is not grafted on texts of Scripture ill-understood, and broken off from their connection, which have been forcibly injected into the mind, or selected by a kind of spiritual lottery. " This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you," Christian ; but is to be suspected of delusion, nourishing pride and self-conceit, and creating a fanciful and presumptuous confidence, accompanied with a feverish tumult in the affections, which bursts out into extravagance of sentiment and irregularity of conduct, and then gradually subsides and sinks to the point of freezing indifference and incredulity.

Genuine Christian assurance proceeds from spiritual illumination by means of the word of God. It is the effect of the Spirit's " opening the understanding to understand the Scriptures," and to know what they testify of Christ. " The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance." " We have known and believed the love of God to us." " The Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true." Faith is the act of an enlightened mind. The convinced sinner does not commit himself to the Saviour blindly, or in ignorance of his revealed character and qualifications. The weakest believer is always ready to give

“a reason of the hope that is in him.” He cannot answer all the cavils of adversaries, but he can maintain his cause with the words of truth and soberness, and sometimes silence the caviller, by the reply of the man whose eyes the Lord opened, “Whether what you allege be true or no, I know not; but one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see.” This persuasion is coolly formed, and cautiously expressed, and it is so because it is enlightened. The Christian, especially at his first believing, is apt to suspect his perceptions, however clear and satisfactory, and to check his assurance, until he has dispassionately examined its grounds, and allowed the transport of his mind to subside. He is apt to go to the opposite extreme from the enthusiast: the latter is presumptuous, the former is jealous and diffident; the latter is satisfied with too little evidence, the former requires too much; the latter mistakes visions for realities, the former, like Thomas of old, suspects the reality to be a vision. The description given of the state of mind into which Peter was thrown, when he was suddenly relieved and led out of prison during the night by the hand of the angel, is illustrative of what the believer sometimes feels: “He wist not that it was true which was done by the angel, but thought he saw a vision. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews. And when he had considered the thing, he came to the house of Mary, where many were gathered together praying.”¹

II. This assurance rests on the best and most stable of all grounds. “I know whom I have believed.” I know who he is—the great God, who made all things, and upholds them by the word of his power, and therefore is mighty to save. I know what he became for the salvation of sinners—he became a man, a partaker of flesh and blood, like the children whom he came to redeem, that by wearing their nature he might be qualified for appearing as their substitute, and doing and enduring what was necessary for their liberation. I know him to be Immanuel, the man God’s fellow, who would lay his hand upon both parties, and by mediation reconcile them. I know that he hath magnified the law, finished transgression, propitiated justice, and obtained eternal redemption, by the sacrifice of himself, which he offered once for all upon the cross; and I know that, made perfect through suffering, he is now on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens, bearing “the keys of hell and death,” and invested by his Father with power over all flesh to give eternal life to as many as he hath given him. Knowing this, the apostle could say, and every believer may say, “I am persuaded that he is able to keep what I have committed to him against that day.” Nor does this merely mean that he can, if he will. It is expressive of moral as well as natural ability,—of all the qualities, personal and offi-

¹ Acts, xii. 9, 11, 12.

cial, legal and spiritual, which are requisite to give security to those who confide in him for everlasting salvation. It includes the good-will and mercy, and faithfulness and sympathy, of the Redeemer, as well as his authority and power; the fulness of the Spirit resident in him, as well as the riches of his merits; the perfection of his atonement; the power of his resurrection; the plenitude of his dominion; the prevalence of his intercession, and the perpetuity of his life and love.

But upon what evidence does the Christian's persuasion of all this rest? Upon the word and promise of him that cannot lie. Nothing short of a divine testimony and assurance could have induced the awakened sinner to intrust Christ with his eternal welfare; and nothing less will sustain the confidence of a believer, who has obtained a clearer and ever-increasing insight into the preciousness of the redemption of his soul, or preserve him from distracting doubts and fears amidst the temptations and infirmities by which he feels himself daily surrounded and oppressed. Woe to his peace of mind, and to his hopes of maintaining the struggle against the devil, the world, and the flesh, escaping the evils of life, and triumphing over death and the grave, if his confidence were built on anything below the word of the Eternal, who hath confirmed it by his oath, "that by two immutable things, wherein it is impossible for God to lie, they might have strong consolation who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them." Woe to the continuance of his peace, if it were based on any act, exercise, or attainment of his own, if it ebbed and flowed under a secondary influence, and if, after being relieved, quickened, and cheered by direct communication from the Fountain of Light, he were doomed henceforth to receive all his comfort by reflection from his own experience!

The grounds on which a believer entertains a hope of eternal salvation, are substantially the same with those upon which he was first induced to rest for pardon and acceptance. The persuasion expressed by our apostle in the text was nothing more than the continuation or following out, by repeated acts, of that exercise which he put forth when he first committed himself to Christ. "The life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."—"The just shall live by faith," and "are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation." Now, upon what grounds does the believer first commit his soul to the redeemer? On the divine testimony concerning Christ in the Gospel. In this testimony there are two things—the attestation, and the thing attested—the one constituting the formal, the other the material ground of his confidence. And both of these are equally important in reference to Christian assurance. Were the thing testified of minor importance, the divinity of the testimony might give assurance of the fact, but would not give confidence of salvation; and, however important and consolatory the doctrine might be, it would fail to create confidence if it rested on testimony not divine. Both of these grounds, however, are to be found in the testi-

mony of God concerning his Son ; and both of them concurred in giving to the apostle assurance of his final salvation. He was assured of this, because he knew and was persuaded that Christ was able to keep that which he had committed to him ; and he was so persuaded, because the word of the infallible Jehovah was pledged for its truth. His faith and his hope rested on the same foundation ; and the same reasons which induced him at first to venture his eternal all upon Christ, supported, under every adverse circumstance, his confidence of obtaining eternal salvation “against that day.” The same grounds which induce a person to commit himself and his property to the sea,—the adaptation of the vessel to the element on which it is launched, the goodness of the mast, the cordage, the rudder and the anchor, with the skill of the mariner, all properly attested to him,—the same grounds give him confidence during the voyage, and in the midst of the storm ; and if he forget or lose confidence in these, he will be at his wit’s end, and throw away all hope, when he sees his bark the sport of wind and wave, and in danger of being engulfed in the yawning deep, or dashed in pieces on the rocky shore.

The clearer that the believer’s views are of the object of his faith, the firmer, of course, will be his assurance. The apostle does not say in our text, I know *that* I have believed, or *in* whom I have believed, though both were true ; but he says, “I know *whom* I have believed,” because he meant to intimate that what he knew of his Saviour was the foundation of his confidence. But then, the Christian acquires additional knowledge of him after he has believed ; and the more he knows of Christ, the greater reason he sees to be satisfied with the step which he has taken, the firmer does his trust become, and the more he is at ease as to its final results. This is one reason why he prizes so much the knowledge of Christ, and labours to increase it. “Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus MY LORD—that I may know him.”¹ This knowledge is not speculative ; it is practical, it is appropriating ; and the Christian’s assurance must rise in proportion to the clearness with which he discovers the stability and security of the foundation on which he rests.

If any one should say to you, “Are you not afraid of losing the money you have intrusted to such a man ?” You would reply, “No, I am not afraid ; for I know him well—I know him to be a good man, not only wealthy and substantial, but faithful, active, skilful, and prudent.” And this confidence admits of being confirmed. You may have a general knowledge of a fellow-citizen, and report may have warranted you to form a favourable opinion of his character ; but if he has come to be intrusted with any part of your property, you will not be satisfied with the hearing of the ear,—you will be desirous to see him with your eyes, to visit him, to become personally and familiarly acquainted with

¹ Phil. iii. 8, 10.

him ; in short, everything relating to him and his affairs will be viewed by you in a new light. So is it with the believer respecting Christ. There is an action and a reaction in his exercise. The consideration that I have committed my soul to the Saviour stimulates me to seek farther acquaintance with him ; and the more enlarged my knowledge of him becomes, the firmer is my reliance upon him.

III. This assurance is strengthened by Christian experience.

That Christian assurance is of different degrees of strength, and admits of increase, is plain from the language of Scripture respecting it. There is an "assurance," and a "full assurance," yea, "all riches of the full assurance." Those who plead that assurance is a simple idea, incapable of increase or diminution, not only contradict the Scripture, and the experience of the saints, but the common feelings of mankind, as expressed in all languages. The degree of assurance is greater in some than in others, and greater in the same individual at one time than at another. The hopes of the Christian are sometimes very lively and strong at the time of his conversion, and become afterwards fainter and more unsteady. Hence the apostle exhorts the believing Hebrews to "hold fast the beginning of their confidence and the rejoicing of their hope unto the end," and warns them against "casting away their confidence." But, generally speaking, this assurance is progressive, and is enjoyed by the Christian in the highest degree at the end of his course, when it has been confirmed by long experience.

By Christian experience, I refer here immediately to the proofs which the believer has derived from his own experience of the grace, power, and faithfulness of God in Christ. These are manifold, and always increasing. Every instance in which a Christian has been enabled to perform a duty, to surmount a difficulty, to resist a temptation, to mortify a corruption, or support an affliction, tends to increase his assurance. In this sense the apostle says : "We glory in tribulations also ; knowing that tribulation worketh patience ; and patience, experience ; and experience, hope ; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost." He had mentioned before as one of the fruits of justification, that believers "rejoiced in hope of the glory of God." But, it might be asked, did not the heavy affliction which they suffered, damp their hope ? No, says he ; on the contrary, it is confirmed by the consolations poured into their hearts, by which they are "strengthened into all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." In a similar strain, he desires the Philippians to take encouragement from the firm and undaunted manner in which they had adhered to Christianity. It is to you, he says, "a token of salvation, and that of God ; for unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake."

Christian experience is often appealed to as a proof of the genuineness

of our faith and hope ; and it is so. But there is another light in which it is often presented in Scripture, and that is, as a proof and confirmation of the divine word and promise, and consequently an encouragement to the believer to trust in it with a firmer and more unhesitating assurance. In this way we find David frequently improving his experience : "The Lord is my strength and my shield : my heart trusted in him, and I am helped ; therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth."¹ This is the burden of the seventy-first Psalm, which begins with a profession of confident hope in God : "In thee, O Lord, do I trust ;" and he takes encouragement from the protection and kindness which he had experienced from his earliest years : "For thou art my hope, O Lord my God ; thou art my trust from my youth ; by thee have I been holden up from the womb." Thus encouraged, he adds, "I will hope continually, and will yet praise thee more and more. Thou who hast showed me great and sore troubles, shalt quicken me again, and shalt bring me up again from the depths of the earth." And yet his hope rested properly on the goodness and power of God as pledged by his faithful word ; and therefore he says, "I will praise thee, even thy truth, O my God," or, as he expresses himself in another psalm, "Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope : this is my comfort in my affliction ; for thy word hath quickened me."² We find the apostle of the Gentiles encouraging himself in the same way : "We trust not in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead ; who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver : in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us."³ "The Lord stood with me, and strengthened me ; and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom."⁴ And the same high ground of consolation he presents to those in whom he had seen the fruits of the Gospel : "GOD IS FAITHFUL, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord."⁵ The experience of God's people, therefore, though not the ground of their assurance, cannot fail to strengthen it.

There is one view in which the inhabitation of the Spirit, including all his operations in the hearts of believers, is represented in Scripture, which contributes greatly to their comfort and assurance. He is called "the earnest of the heavenly inheritance," and his operations are called its "first fruits." As the first fruits offered unto God and sanctified were to the Israelites an assurance of the full harvest, so the fruits of the Spirit are to the believer an assurance of eternal life. "Ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." If a man of character promise us an inheritance, we trust him ; but if he gives us, not only a token and pledge, but an earnest, by putting us in possession

¹ Ps. xxviii. 7.⁴ 2 Tim. iv. 17.² Ps. cxix. 49.³ 2 Cor. i. 9.⁵ 1 Cor. i. 9.

of a valuable part of the gift, our confidence in him, and our expectation of the complete enjoyment of the property, is greatly increased. The application of this to the subject before us cannot be better expressed than in the words of the apostle to the Ephesians : "In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation : in whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession."

IV. This persuasion will stand the severest test.

It is easy to make use of great swelling words in talking of our Christian assurance. It is not difficult to indulge a confident persuasion of eternal happiness in the time of health and prosperity, when the evil day is far away from us. It is otherwise when the wind of temptation blows, and all the waves and billows of affliction go over us. The confidence of many is as easily shaken as that of the Psalmist was : "In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved. Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong : thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled."¹ When God's dispensations wear a frowning aspect, when his Providence seems to fight against his promises, then comes the trial of the genuineness and strength of our confidence. If genuine, it will come out of the furnace like gold which has stood the fire, and receive the stamp of heaven. Such was the confidence of Job, when he said, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him."² And such was that of our apostle : "For the which cause I also suffer these things ; nevertheless I am not ashamed : for I know whom I have believed."

To the Christian himself these trials are useful in ascertaining the strength of his faith. "If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small."³ There is a difference between the real and the relative strength of assurance. A person may be ready to sink under a burden which has been laid on him, and yet his strength is not less than it was when he was a little before walking erect and at his ease. To recur to the metaphor formerly employed,—if a report is circulated that the person with whom you have deposited your property has become insolvent or unfaithful, and you should be thrown into distress by this intelligence, your confidence in him is not really less than it was ; but it is subjected to a greater trial, and has to conflict with considerations not formerly placed in your view. Hence the twofold use of such trials : they show us that our faith is not so vigorous as we may have presumed it to be ; and if it stand the test, it comes out purer and stronger than ever. Steady and firm as the basis on which it is built, true Christian confidence will bear the severest test which can be applied to it ; not only of afflictions, but death itself, in its most terrible forms. Then, instead of sinking, it rises to the full assurance of hope. "Nay, in all

¹ Ps. xxx. 6, 7.

² Job, xiii. 15.

³ Prov. xxiv. 10.

these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

V. This persuasion exerts a powerful and extensive influence on the Christian life. Assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, are closely connected with increase of grace and perseverance therein to the end. Those who enjoy peace with God, and rejoice in hope of his glory, have little or no cause to dread earthly evils, and may glory in tribulations. Nothing tends more to inspire the soul with unshaken fortitude and heroic courage, than a persuasion that our final salvation is sure under the management of Christ. When the men of Ai looked behind them, and saw their city, in which were their wives and children and treasures, enveloped in flames, "they had no power to flee this way or that way,"¹ and became an easy prey to the children of Israel. On the other hand, when soldiers know that all that is valuable and dear to them is secured in a fortified place, they will go forth with undaunted resolution to face the enemy. "What shall we say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?" Besides, this assurance has also a powerful influence in stimulating the believer to make progress in holiness. Were it to rise at once to its greatest height, or were the attainment of it independent of the use of means, there would be a specious pretext for saying that it is unfavourable to holiness. But this is far from being the case. Instead of relaxing diligence, or inducing sloth, a lively hope of salvation has, on the contrary, a powerful tendency to animate the Christian to the most vigorous exertions, and the most patient enduring. "We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." It is not an assurance that they shall be happy without being holy, nor is it an assurance that they shall be made holy without the use of means. Paul lived in the full and blessed assurance of faith; and what a life of disinterested, holy, self-denying, and persevering activity did he lead, spending and being spent for Christ and the souls of men! "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure." In fine, this persuasion must exert a pervading influence over the whole life of the Christian, for it engages and fills all the affections. "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." Those who have committed their souls to Christ, will be frequently looking to the place where he is; "their conversation," their citizenship and their traffic, "is in heaven;" they will live under "the powers of the world to come." "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth; for ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When

¹ Joshua, viii. 20.

Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. Mortify, therefore, your members which are upon the earth."

From this subject, let us learn, in the first place, that one article of the faith once delivered to the saints for which we are to contend is, that a Christian may attain a satisfying and full assurance of his final salvation. It is impossible to look attentively into the Scriptures without finding it written there in most distinct characters. The contrary doctrine not only contradicts the experience of the saints,—it strikes directly against the scheme of grace revealed by the Gospel, is irreconcilable with the perfection of the atonement, and can be maintained only on the supposition of the Arminian tenet, that eternal life, instead of being the gift of God through Christ, is the pactional wages of an obedience persevered in till death. Christians are bound to seek assurance—it is their infirmity, their sin, and not merely their misfortune, that they do not attain it.

2. We may learn from this subject to avoid extremes on this doctrine. Assurance is of two kinds, which have been designed the assurance of faith and the assurance of sense. The former is direct, the latter indirect. The former is founded on the testimony of God, the latter on experience. The object of the former is entirely without us, the object of the latter is chiefly within us. "God hath spoken in his holiness, I will rejoice," is the language of the former; "We are his workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus," is the language of the latter. When a man gives me his promissory-note, I have the assurance of faith; when he gives me a pledge, or pays the interest regularly, or advances the principal sum by instalments, I have the assurance of sense. They are perfectly consistent with one another, may exist in the soul at the same time, and their combination carries assurance to the highest point.

Those who deny the assurance of faith appear to labour under a mistake both as to the Gospel and as to believing. The Gospel does not consist of general doctrine merely, but also of promises indefinitely proposed to all who hear it, to be enjoyed, not on the condition of believing, but in the way of believing. "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins."—"I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean."—"I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts."—"Behold, I bring you glad tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people." Can a person believe these promises, truly and with understanding, without having some assurance of the blessings promised? There appears also to be a mistake as to the nature of faith, and the place which it holds in the application of redemption. It is a trusting in Christ, a relying upon him for salvation upon the ground of

the divine testimony respecting him ; and does not this always imply some degree of assurance or confidence ? When we refer, in the way of illustration, to a drowning man trusting himself to the rope which is thrown to him, or to a person who confides in him to whom he has intrusted his property, we are told that the former must first lay hold of the rope before he can trust to be saved by it, and the latter must commit his property to the depository before he can entertain a persuasion of its security. But the mistake lies here, that in the cases referred to there are two acts, a bodily and a mental ; whereas in the case under our consideration there is but one, which serves both purposes. Faith at once lays hold of Christ, and is persuaded of safety by him ; by one and the same act it commits the soul to Christ, and is persuaded he will keep it. This is the mystery, that God should have appointed faith or resting upon Christ as the means of interesting in him and his salvation. There is nothing like it in nature or among human transactions ; and hence the danger of our losing ourselves and obscuring the truth by having recourse to distant analogies and straining inadequate comparisons. But the place which has been assigned to faith is one of the most striking proofs of the wisdom of God, as it at once secures the glory of divine grace, and provides for the consolation of those who flee for refuge to the hope set before them. “It is of faith that it might be by grace, that the promise might be sure to all the seed.”

Others go to an opposite extreme. They maintain that every true Christian always enjoys an absolute and unwavering certainty as to his final happiness—that he is a true believer, and in a state of salvation ; and they dwell on the assurance of faith, to the neglect of the evidence which arises from Christian experience and growth in holiness. This is apt to cherish a spirit of presumption on the one hand, and to throw persons into a state of despondency on the other. There are various degrees of assurance, and in some genuine believers it may be scarcely perceptible. He who is the author and finisher of our faith was careful not to break the bruised reed, or quench the smoking flax. While he rebuked the unbelief and unreasonable doubts of his disciples, he never called in question the reality of their faith. He received the man who said, “Lord, I believe ; help thou mine unbelief.” While he said to Peter, “O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt ?” he took him by the hand, and lifted him out of the water. Grant that doubting is sinful, is there a just man on earth that doeth good and sinneth not ? Are not the love and patience, and other gracious dispositions of a Christian, also sinfully defective ? Urge the admonition, “Be not faithless, but believing,” but neglect not to urge also, “Be ye holy, for I am holy. Be perfect, as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Would it not be dangerous to the interests of holiness, and discreditable to religion, if a person were supposed to be in possession of perfect assurance while subject to imperfection in every other respect ? Is there not a

proportional growth in all the members of the spiritual man? Would he not otherwise be a monstrous creature? Or is the exploded doctrine of sinless perfection in this life to be revived among us? He whose faith is faultless, and his assurance perfect and unvarying, sees Christ as he is, and is already completely like him. He would not be a fit inhabitant of earth, and the only prayer he could put up would be, "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace."—"Let us go on to perfection." The genuine Christian is conscious of his remaining imperfection. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus."

On the other hand, it is no valid objection to the doctrine of the direct assurance of faith, that final salvation is only to be obtained after a persevering course of holy obedience, and patient suffering according to the word of God. If holiness were the condition of eternal life, then unquestionably there could be no genuine hope of the latter but what was founded on the former; nay, there could be no such thing as an assurance of it in this life, for it is only "he who endureth to the end that shall be saved." But if salvation is of grace—if Christ is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, and if there are in the New Covenant promises securing perseverance, and providing all needful assistance for the discharge of duty and progressive advancement in the Christian life, then all that grace and ability, and all these securities enter into the matter and ground of faith, even from the beginning, and produce a well-founded, though humble, self-denying confidence of final victory and eternal rest. It is the hope, not of being saved absolutely, but of being saved in God's way—not simply of getting to heaven, but of being meet for the inheritance of the saints in light—not of being crowned without a struggle, but of being enabled to fight the good fight, and made "more than conquerors through him that loved us."

Finally, Christian hope is the inseparable companion of faith in Christ. Some would separate these graces, or at least represent them as resting on different grounds, and embracing different objects. According to them, the object of faith is the Gospel—the object of hope, an actual interest in the salvation which the Gospel reveals; the former resting on the testimony of God, the latter on that of our own consciences, and our evidences of a gracious state. This does not appear to be the doctrine of Scripture. They are no doubt distinct graces, the one regarding the promise as *true*, and the other regarding it as *good*. But they have the same ground—the infallible word of God; and what is hope but the outgoing of the soul in the expectation of what it believes? We confound our views on this subject by the use made of the word *hope* in the affairs of this life. Worldly hopes are founded upon probabilities. We expect a benefit—we hope that our friend will bestow it;

but having been often disappointed in such cases, we learn to moderate our expectations, and to guard against confidence. But surely it is otherwise with hope in God. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Instead of indulging, we ought to check our unbelieving suspicions and fears, saying with the Psalmist, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? still hope in God, for I shall yet praise him." "All flesh is as grass, and the glory of man as the flower of grass: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever; and this is the word which by the Gospel is preached unto you."

SERMON XVI.

THE RECOVERED DISCIPLE.

"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."—LUKE, xxii. 32.

IF there is any season in which the admonition, "Rejoice with trembling," might be dispensed with, it is surely when the believer is sitting at the table of his Saviour, commemorating that death by which he finished redemption, and receiving the sensible tokens of his love. And yet even there we have reason for mixed exercise, and for tempering our joy in Christ with a godly jealousy over ourselves. How forcibly is this practical truth impressed on our minds by the events recorded in the chapter before us, connected as they were with the first celebration of that divine ordinance! It was when sitting with his disciples at the table, and reaching to them the sacred memorials of his dying love, that Jesus had to say, "Behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table." This intimation caused, as it well might, "great searchings of heart." The disciples were "very sorrowful." But, alas! how deceitful is our goodness! how fitful and momentary our frames both of love and grief! What reason has the Saviour to complain of each of us, "What shall I do to thee?—and what shall I do to thee? for thy goodness is as the morning cloud, as the early dew it passeth away!" Scarcely was the feast over, and the table drawn, when the guests forgot themselves so far as to enter into a most unseasonable, unseemly contest, as to precedence in that kingdom which they had been just taught, sacramentally, was to be established by sufferings and blood. And in spite of all their vows, next sun had not dawned before the most resolute of their number had repeatedly and solemnly denied his Master; and that, too, after being affectionately and faithfully warned of his danger. Lord, what is man?—the best of men? Less than vanity, a lie, when left to himself. O how loudly does this fact sound in the ears of such of us as were lately at the Lord's table! How does it summon us to self-examination after supper as well as before it, to humiliation under a sense of our miscarriages and failures, even though they should only have been partial, to vigilance and circumspection, and humble walking before God! How does it call upon us to flee to the true hiding-place, and diligently to use all appointed

means for fortifying our own minds and those of our brethren against temptation !

As preparatory to the holy communion, I directed your attention to the deeply interesting colloquy which the Saviour held with Peter, before his ascension, and in which he led him to profess his attachment to his Master as often as he had denied him. On that occasion, Christ, after each reply, laid an injunction upon him : “ Feed my sheep—feed my lambs.” As if he had said, By this evince the sincerity and fervour of thy love to me,—by tending, feeding, and watching over those for whom I have laid down my life, and by dealing tenderly and gently with such of them as may be feeble or diseased, seeking that which is lost, bringing again that which has been driven away, binding up that which was broken, and strengthening that which is sick. This task Peter discharged, as an apostle and bishop of souls, in his personal ministry and by his written instructions ; and not contented with his own exertions, he was not neglectful to stir up the pure minds of his fellow-labourers : “ The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder,”—“ feed the flock of God.” But as that charge relates especially to such as are called to fill a public office in the church, I reckon it more suitable to your circumstances and stations to turn your attention to the injunction which the Saviour gave to the same individual on another occasion : “ When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.”

The words of our text were addressed by our Lord to Peter, when he forewarned him of his mournful fall, and foretold his merciful recovery. “ And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat : but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not ; and *when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.*” As if he had said, When the time shall come, that, in answer to my prayer, thou shalt be recovered by the grace of God from thy fall, brought to a sense of thy sin, and restored to former peace of mind, look upon it as a duty peculiarly incumbent on thee to use the experience which thou hast acquired, by doing everything in thy power to fortify thy fellow-disciples against temptation, or to recover them from sin, if, like thyself, they shall fall through temptation. The words, therefore, teach us, That it is peculiarly incumbent on Christians who have been recovered from falls, to strengthen their brethren. And in discoursing from them we propose, in the *first* place, to make some observations on the recovery of fallen believers ; in the *second* place, to explain the duty devolving on such as have been recovered, which is, to “ strengthen their brethren ;” and, in the *last* place, to enforce the duty, by specifying the peculiar obligations which they are under to perform this office of brotherly kindness.

I. On the recovery of fallen believers.

1. I begin by remarking that true believers, as well as others, are

liable to fall into sin. This is implied in all the warnings which the Scriptures give on this head. "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief." "Let us labour—lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief." It is also evident from Scripture example, of which that of Peter is instead of a thousand. As some professors of religion may fall totally and irrecoverably from Christ, after very high and specious attainments, so genuine Christians may fall very foully, and for a time may remain in a desperate-like condition. The promises and provisions of the covenant of grace secure all those who are vitally united to Christ from total and final apostasy, but there is no arrangement made securing that they shall not sin, and by their sin grievously dishonour God, wound their own consciences, lay a stumblingblock before others, and subject themselves to severe chastisement.

There are other ways of failing in our allegiance to Christ, and even of denying him, than that in which Peter offended. Let us not think that we are safe, because our circumstances are very different from those in which he was placed. There is such a thing as denying by works as well as by words; yea, we may deny him in our heart, by yielding our affections to his rivals. Let us mention some of the ways in which we may fall from the attachment and service which we owe to him.

We may fall into *spiritual decay*. Instead of growing in grace, and abounding in the fruits of righteousness, we may languish, and become in a great degree "barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ." Through carelessness and carnality, a Christian may suffer himself to be shorn of his strength, and become, for a time, like another man. He is "blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins." His faith wavers, his love waxes cold, his hope is shaken, he loses his wonted relish for the word, restrains prayer before God in secret, and turns negligent or formal in waiting on the ordinances of religion. "I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love."

We may fall into *errors*, dangerous and hurtful to the soul. This fall is often the consequence of the former. You will see from the epistles to the churches of Asia, that when they left their first love, and faith, and patience, they became infected with the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes, of Balaam, and of "that woman Jezebel, who called herself a prophetess." And of Christians at a subsequent period it is said, that "because they received not the love of the truth, God sent them strong delusion that they should believe a lie."¹ At other times this defection is to be traced to spiritual pride, puffing up persons with a high conceit of their piety, knowledge, and talents, leading them to despise instruction, and to forsake the good old way in which the children of God in

¹ 2 Thes. ii. 11.

all ages have found food and rest to their souls, and to betake themselves to new and untrodden paths, where they wander in endless and inextricable mazes of error. There was nothing against which the apostles were more particular in warning their converts, than the delusions of false doctrine. And we live in a time when it is peculiarly necessary to attend to these warnings. The time is come when "men will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own lusts heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears, and they turn away their ears from the truth, and are turned unto fables."¹

We are in danger of falling into *open vice and immorality*. It has often been found that error and immorality go hand in hand. The Gospel is "the doctrine according to godliness;" deviations from it "increase unto more ungodliness." The truth alone can sanctify; error, though it may not always directly encourage vice and irreligion, must be inefficacious in subduing the corruption of the heart, and in promoting true holiness. But even when Christians are not entangled with error, they are in danger of falling into the grossest sin. There is always need for the call, "Awake to righteousness, and sin not." "Evil communications corrupt good manners." "But fornication, and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not once be named among you, as becometh saints."

2. The call to those who have so fallen is to convert and turn to the Lord. There is a twofold conversion: one when a sinner is turned from death to life, and from the power of Satan unto God; and another when a saint is recovered from the snare of the devil, into which he had fallen through his own unwatchfulness and corruption;—and the last is as necessary as the first. "Remember from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works," is Christ's call, not only to every church, but to every individual, who has "left his first love." All who are converted, do convert or turn from their evil ways. The Psalmist prayed, "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity;" but he tells us also, "I thought upon my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies."² There is no salvation, or security, or peace, in sin. We must be saved from our iniquities, by being every one of us turned away from them. And this holds as to believers equally with others. True, they cannot perish, but equally true is it that they cannot continue in their sins. Judas "by transgression fell," and remained as he fell, "that he might go to his own place;" Peter, when "his feet were almost gone," was recovered in the way of his repenting of his transgression. This duty of repentance is incumbent on them from the first moment of their falling into sin. Nothing can be more dangerous than their remaining, even for a short period, indifferent and impenitent. Having provoked the Spirit of God to withdraw his influences, and being left to themselves, they are in danger of going farther and farther from the right path. Thus David,

¹ 2 Tim. iv. 3.

² Ps. cxix. 37, 59.

by remaining impenitent under the sin of adultery, was left to fall (fearful to tell!) into that of murder. By transgressing the law of God, Christian, you enter the devil's territories; and he will not neglect the advantage which this gives him over you. How pitiable the case of Samson, when the Philistines were upon him, and his strength had departed! How wretched the plight of Saul, when, deserted by God, and driven to despair, he cried out, "I am sore distressed; for the Philistines make war against me, and God is departed from me, and answereth me no more!"¹

3. The recovery of believers from their falls requires an exertion of divine power and mercy of the same kind with that which was put forth in their regeneration or first conversion. Accordingly, the change produced is called by the same name. "When thou art converted." We say not that it requires the same degree of power, for the fall of a believer does not extinguish the principle of grace within him; but it weakens it, and gives the opposite principle the advantage and superiority for the time. The "law in the members" wars successfully against "the law of the mind," and brings the soul into captivity to the law of sin.² A man who has broken a limb by a fall needs foreign aid, and must be lifted up and carried in the same way as a dead man—that is, by the strength and exertion of another person. Grace received is not enough to enable a Christian to prosecute his course; he must receive a new accession for every new step which he takes. Much more is this necessary to lift him up when he has fallen, and to restore him when he has wandered. The foolish sheep which has left its pasture would never return, if it were not followed and sought out and brought back by the shepherd. Think you that Peter would have been able again to look his offended Lord in the face, if the Lord had not first looked upon him? Ah, no: he would have shunned him, turned from him, fled from him. "The voice of the Lord is powerful," and so is his glance. If the former is terrible as the thunder, the latter is quick and penetrating like the lightning. The look which Jesus cast on the fallen disciple was equally divine and efficacious with the word which at first made him forsake all and follow him. It pierced his soul, it melted his heart, it laid open his thoughts, it brought him to himself. It produced at once conviction and conversion. "The Lord looked upon Peter—and Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly!" It was fit that he who had trembled at a word, should weep at a look.

4. The intercession of Christ secures the recovery of fallen believers. "Confess your faults one to another," says the apostle James, "and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." But the

¹ 1 Sam. xxviii. 15.

² Rom. vii. 23.

grand security for believers lies in the prayers of their Elder Brother who is on high. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." This encouragement was not confined to Peter: "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." He is continually praying for his people: "I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that thou wouldst keep them from the evil." And when at any time they have fallen into sin, he intercedes for their pardon and recovery, and sends his Spirit to convince them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. "And he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan; even the Lord that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire? Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. And he answered, and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment."¹

5. The sovereignty of divine grace is displayed in the recovery of fallen saints. It is displayed as to the *time*. "When thou art converted," says Christ, leaving it quite indefinite. It might be soon, or it might be late. Peter was very speedily brought to repentance. Scarcely has the roaring lion seized on his prey, when, hearing the voice of Christ, he is forced to let it go, though not till he has inflicted on his intended victim marks of his envenomed malice. "I have prayed for thee," says Christ, "that thy faith fail not;" and the prayer of Christ was an immediate rebuke to the devil. Others again, as we see in the case of David, remain in a hardened, or at least insensible state, for months or even years. Sovereignty is displayed as to the *process* by which the recovery is effected. Legal terrors, or distressing doubts about forgiveness, may be prolonged. Thus the Psalmist had to complain, "Day and night thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer." How long it was before the dart was extracted from Peter's liver, we are not told; but it is probable that the wound was not completely healed until the conversation which took place before the ascension of Christ. The same thing happens as to fallen churches. "The children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice;—afterwards shall they return and seek the Lord their God, and David their king, and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days."²

6. Those who have been recovered from falls derive much spiritual wisdom from their painful experience. Their knowledge is improved. How much more intimate must be their acquaintance with themselves,

¹ Zech. iii. 1—4.

² Hos. iii. 4, 5.

and especially with their own hearts—so deceitful by nature, and desperately wicked! How much more enlarged their knowledge of the world, and of the depths and devices of their invisible enemy! Their knowledge of sin is increased by what they have felt of its bitter fruits—of the Saviour, by experiencing the renewed tokens of his affection and compassion. They are rendered more humble and charitable, more circumspect, more vigilant, more zealous and active. In fine, being strengthened themselves, they are more qualified for strengthening others.

II. Let us now explain the duty enjoined in the text, on such as have been recovered from falls. “When thou art converted, *strengthen thy brethren.*”

We may be said to “strengthen the brethren” when we contribute in any degree to their spiritual advantage and growth in grace, stimulating them to a holy life, and encouraging them to hold fast the profession of their faith, and thus preventing them from falling; or when we recover them from their errors and defections. “Strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees,” and “make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.” Now this kind office may be performed in different ways, and by various means.

1. The recovered disciple may strengthen his brethren by fervent prayer in their behalf—committing them “to Him who is able to keep them from falling,” and imploring his mercy and grace to raise them up when they have been “overtaken in a fault.” “I have prayed for thee,” said Christ to Peter; and in this he showed us an example. This ought to accompany all the other means which we employ, and it may be the only means which we have it in our power to use. However far the objects of our care are removed from us in respect of place or affection, we are always at liberty to use our influence in their behalf at the throne of grace. Whatever alienation may take place between us and our Christian brethren, though they should smite us, and cast out our names as evil, and shut their doors against us, our prayer may still be for them in their calamities. When advice has been spurned, and argument has served only to irritate, this means has sometimes proved successful. “Pray one for another, that ye may be healed,” says the apostle James; and he connects this with the conversion of an erring brother: “Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him, let him know that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” Unspeakable reward! Best of answers to prayer!

2. The recovered disciple may strengthen his brethren by example. One evidence of a sanctified fall is the greater care which a person takes in ordering his conversation. By a holy, circumspect, tender walk, by

an open, decided, and unwavering confession of the name of Christ, by a regular attendance upon ordinances, and by a cheerful submission to afflictions, we may be the means of alluring strangers to join themselves to the Lord, and cannot fail to confirm the souls of the disciples. "They that fear thee will be glad when they see me,"¹ says David, when avouching his love to the law of God, and imploring divine leading. Without the accompaniment of a holy life, our prayers will not be acceptable to God, and our advices will be unsuccessful with men. "Thy servant Job shall pray for you, for *him* will I accept, lest I deal with you after your folly."² "Let *the righteous* smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities."³ This is one way in which those who have offended will be particularly concerned to edify others: like Hezekiah, they "will go softly all their years in the bitterness of their soul."⁴ And thus "if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won, while they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear." To this we may add, that nothing tends more to confirm the faith of our brethren than the patient endurance of reproach and suffering for the sake of the Gospel. Such was the effect of the sufferings of Paul at Rome: "Many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."⁵ And our Lord intimated that Peter, by submitting to a violent death for his sake, would glorify God, and at the same time strengthen his brethren, by giving this proof of his firm attachment to him whom he had formerly, through the fear of death, denied.

3. The recovered believer may strengthen his brethren by instruction. Though he may not, like Peter, be called to "feed Christ's lambs" in the public capacity of an under-shepherd, yet according to his station, talents, and opportunities, it is his duty to instruct his brethren. More particularly, he is to strengthen his brethren,

(1.) By warning them faithfully and affectionately of the danger of falling into sin. "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin." "Be not secure" (the converted saint will say); "you are exposed to danger from within and from without. You have evil hearts, and you live in an evil world; and there is an invisible foe hovering around you, and waiting for your halting. Brother, brother, Satan is desiring you, to sift you as wheat. I have prayed for you, but trust not to my prayers. Be sober, be vigilant, for your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. O be not high-minded, but fear. Be warned by my example

¹ Ps. cxix. 74.² Job. xlii. 8.³ Ps. cxli. 5.⁴ Is. xxxviii. 15.⁵ Phil. i. 14.

to avoid pride and self-confidence. Tamper not with temptation. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth its colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright; for at the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder."

(2.) By acquainting them with the bitter fruits of sin. None knoweth the power of God's wrath but his own Son, into whose soul, when standing as the surety of sinners, it was poured immeasurably. But next to him, his saints feel it most sensibly, when, yielding to temptation, they fall into sin and under a sense of wrath. "It pleased the Lord (says one) to shoot an arrow of wrath suddenly into my soul, which pierced my soul and body both. It lasted not long—if it had, I had been a most miserable spectacle. I have sometimes wished for some drops of wrath to awaken me out of a secure frame; but I found one drop—intolerable! Who knoweth the power of his wrath? Tongue cannot express it. O precious Christ! O precious blood! Horror and despair had swallowed me up, had it not been that blood, the blood of God." David in the thirty-eighth, and Heman in the eighty-eighth psalm, express the same feelings in still more striking terms: "Thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger, neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. My soul is full of troubles, and my life draweth nigh unto the grave. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves." None so qualified for proclaiming the terrors of the Lord, or dissuading from sin, as those who have felt in this manner.

(3.) By leading them to that grace whereby alone they can be established and made to stand in the hour of temptation, or can be recovered when they have fallen. Peter knew that he had fallen by trusting to himself, and that he was recovered by the grace of Christ, who prayed for him, and who had converted and continued to uphold him. And therefore he directed his brethren to the true grace of God wherein they stood. Hence, in his first epistle, he blesses "God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who had begotten them to a lively hope"—and describes them as "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation"—built upon Christ, "the living and chief corner-stone." And in the close of the epistle he rolls them over upon this all-sufficient support. "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you." Ministers and private Christians are but feeble props. "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." But he is the Rock; and his work is perfect. He will not leave the work unfinished. He is "the God of *all* grace"—pardon-

ing grace, sanctifying grace, renewing grace, recovering grace, glorifying grace. The more a Christian is emptied of himself, the more he is made sensible of his own weakness and worthlessness, and the more singly that he depends on the grace that is in Christ Jesus—the safer he is. We go forth to the combat in our own strength, and we are foiled; we repeat the attempt, and are again foiled. We are always forgetting the lesson, and need to be reminded of it, that our strength is weakness, and our wisdom folly, and that all our sufficiency is of God.

(4.) We may strengthen our brethren by directing them to the means of establishment. Though the work is God's, yet he accomplishes it by means, and in the use of these we are to co-operate with him. Among those means which Peter specifies (and I shall confine myself to these at present) are the following:—He recommends a lively recollection of the price by which we were redeemed. "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear, forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ."¹ He brings to their remembrance the high character which belonged to them as Christians: "Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people."² He inculcates an abiding sense of the essential holiness of that God to whom they are redeemed: "As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as he which has called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."³ He presses on them the cherishing of a holy awe of the Divine Majesty and greatness, as an antidote against the fear of man. "Be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."⁴ He strongly insists on humility. "Be clothed with humility; for God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble."⁵ He points out the necessity of sobriety and vigilance, as becoming those who are pilgrims, and who know that they are in an enemy's country, and that the Lord is at hand.⁶ And as they were ready to be shaken with trials, he places their privileges over against these,—shows the salutary tendency of affliction—proposes to them the example of Christ's sufferings—and sets before them the glorious issue of them all.⁷

(5.) We are to strengthen our brethren by using all proper exertions to recover those that are fallen, and especially by administering to them the comforts of the Gospel. This is the evangelical, the divine way of recovering from falls. The terrors of the law can only convince; sometimes they harden. "There is no hope," the sinner will say: "no; for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go." The promises and consolations of the Gospel recover and heal. "For the iniquity of

¹ 1 Pet. i. 17.⁶ Ib. v. 5.² Ib. ii. 9.⁶ Ib. v. 8.³ Ib. i. 14.⁷ Ib. i. 2, 4, 7; iii. 21; iv. 12—14.⁴ Ib. iii. 14.

his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him, and he went on frowardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him ; I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners.”¹ “I will heal their backslidings, I will love them freely : for mine anger is turned away from him.”²

The Christian who has himself been restored, will exert himself to recover those who have fallen, with long-suffering and compassion. Their case will draw forth his strongest sympathies. He will not stand at a distance from them, or despise them, nor will he soon or easily despair of their recovery, but will “reprove and rebuke and exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.” And when he has brought them to a sense of their sin, he will pour in the balm of consolation into their wounded spirits. He is bound to “comfort others with the same comfort wherewith he himself is comforted of God ;” and will be disposed to use towards them the same tenderness with which Christ has treated him. “Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye, which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness ; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.”³

III. Let us now briefly mention some of the obligations which lie on the recovered Christian to perform this office of brotherly kindness.

1. Gratitude to his deliverer requires it. Has he, converted Christian, had mercy on your souls, cast all your sins behind his back, restored you again, and made you to walk in the paths of righteousness ? And will you not, at his call, exert yourself for advancing his glory, by promoting the spiritual welfare of those who are dear to him ? “I endure all things,” says Paul, “for the elect’s sake, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” “Restore unto me,” says David, “the joy of thy salvation ; and uphold me with thy free Spirit : then will I teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto thee.” “Lovest thou me ?” said Christ to Peter. “Feed *my lambs*—feed *my sheep*.”

2. Love to the brethren, raised to sympathy by a recollection of their own circumstances, binds recovered Christians to strengthen their brethren. This is the best way in which we can testify our regard to them. What would we think of a person who had nearly lost his life by falling over a precipice, and yet should neglect to warn others of the danger ? or of one who had been cured of a dangerous disease, and refused to communicate the remedy to those who were afflicted in the same manner in which he had been ?

3. A recollection of the dishonour which they did to Christ, and the injury which they inflicted on their brethren, will excite them to make reparation, so far as it may be in their power. The fall of Peter must have had a great effect in staggering his brethren, considering the boldness which he had all along discovered in confessing Christ : they must

¹ Isa. lvii. 17, 18.

² Hos. xiv. 4.

³ Gal. vi. 1.

have felt as soldiers "when a standard-bearer fainteth." He considered it, therefore, to be his duty, by every means in his power, to re-establish and comfort their minds. "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure : for if ye do these things ye shall never fall." "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth."¹

4. The experience which they have acquired is a gift which they are bound to lay out for the public good. "As every man," says Peter, "hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." Here all the qualifications already noticed, by which the recovered believer is peculiarly fitted for the service of strengthening his brethren, might have been adduced to enforce the duty. He has not been humbled, merely to teach himself circumspection, or graciously lifted up, merely to increase his gratitude to his deliverer ; his experience has qualified him for the task of strengthening others, and lays him under strong obligations to the discharge of it, that they also may be "partakers of the benefit."

From this subject we may learn, in the first place, that the Scripture doctrine of the perseverance of the saints is not inimical or unfriendly to holiness. You see, from the example of Peter, that the perseverance of the saints is consistent with their falling into sin, and consequently with exhortations and warnings on the part of God, and with caution and watchfulness on their part. Some represent this doctrine as calculated to make persons careless, and others scruple to preach it lest it should have this effect. Our Lord had no fears or scruples on this head ; for he tells Peter, before he entered into temptation, that he had prayed for him, that his faith might not give up the ghost. Let us not attempt to be wiser and more prudent than our Lord. A state of grace does not secure against falling into sin, but it secures recovery from it, and this recovery is brought about in such a way as not only to strengthen the good principles implanted in the heart of the individual, but also to fit and dispose him to strengthen others. To imagine that the Christian who has fallen and been mercifully recovered, will be induced to fall again from the prospect of a similar interposition, is as preposterous as to suppose that a man who had, through carelessness, broken a limb, will expose himself to the same calamity, merely because he had experienced the skill and attention of the surgeon in healing it.

2. See again, my brethren, the wisdom of God in overruling the falls of believers for the best and holiest ends. "Out of the eater came forth meat, and sweetness out of the strong." Not only does grace superabound when sin abounds, but sin is shown, and seen, and felt, to be "exceeding sinful ;" and one sin is made the means of preventing the commission of many sins. Among the many lessons which Peter's fall

¹ 2 Peter, i. 10—15.

inculcates, this is not the least, that it is an evil thing and a bitter for a saint to depart from the Lord. Yet from its bitter, and in themselves noxious and poisonous ingredients, divine grace can extract a balm, which shall impart health and vigour to multitudes. Who so successful and honoured in winning men to Christ, and in confirming the souls of the disciples, as the miraculously converted persecutor, and the twice-converted fisherman? We are apt to perplex our minds by curious inquiries as to the origin of moral evil, and the entrance of sin into the world; but while we may rest assured that nothing could enter into God's world without his knowledge and permission, would we not be more profitably employed in contemplating the wisdom which educes good not only from "seeming," but from real and great "evil?"

3. Learn the evil of selfishness in religion. Say not with the first murderer, "Am I my brother's keeper?" Christ does not merely say to Peter, "When thou art converted—sin no more, lest a worse thing come unto thee," but "strengthen thy brethren." And let none of you think that because you occupy a private station in the church, you may be excused from this service, and devolve it on her public overseers. "None of us liveth to himself. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification."

4. If, however, it be sinful for us to neglect this duty, how much greater must be the sin of throwing a stumbling-block before others? If it be our duty to "strengthen our brethren," what a grievous offence to weaken, shake, and overthrow them—and then, perhaps to rejoice over their fall! "Through thy knowledge shall thy brother perish for whom Christ died?" Wouldst thou destroy him whom Christ died to save? "It is impossible but that offences must come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! It were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."

Finally, let us learn a lesson of caution and circumspection. The eyes of the church and the world, Christian, are upon you. The eyes of Satan are upon you. And the eyes of God are upon you. See then that ye walk circumspectly. Be humble. Live near the Lord. Live by faith. O beware of what will dishonour God, bring discredit on your profession, wound your consciences, grieve your friends, and gratify your enemies! "Ye, beloved, building up yourselves in your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, unto eternal life." "Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and ever. Amen."

SERMON XVII.¹

THE SPIRIT OF JUDGMENT.

"In that day shall the Lord of Hosts be for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment."—ISA. xxviii. 5, 6.

NEXT to the enactment of just and wholesome laws, the due administration of them is of the highest importance to a community. This has accordingly engaged the particular attention of every people who have attained to any considerable degree of civilisation. The most enlightened nations have separated the judicial from the legislative authority, rendered judges, in the discharge of their functions, independent of the supreme executive magistrate in the state, and adopted other precautions, with the view of keeping the channels by which justice is dispensed through all the departments of society pure and uncorrupted. Nor is the jealousy which they manifested on this head to be censured as excessive. By the wise and impartial administration of justice a people have been reconciled to the rule of a usurper, and tyranny itself has become tolerable; whereas the neglect or perversion of justice has made them unhappy and discontented under the best form of political government. The salutary effects of righteous judgment are not confined to the securing of individual rights, the repressing of the bad, and the protecting of the good and peaceable. Under its fostering shade every useful art and every liberal science flourish; the honour of the laws being preserved unsullied, a cheerful obedience is yielded to their authority; morality is promoted by an exhibition of the connection which subsists between its essential principles and the temporal welfare of men; and piety is indirectly, but powerfully, strengthened by the thoughts being irresistibly raised to the fountain of all justice, and by the representation, faint indeed, but not scenic, which is given of the great assize before which all must at last appear.

If the distribution of justice in secular kingdoms, and in relation to the affairs of this life, is of so great moment, it must be of still greater importance in that society which is styled "the kingdom of heaven," and in relation to things connected with the eternal interests of men. "The habitation of justice" is one of the appellations given to the

¹ Delivered at the opening of the Synod of Original Seceders, Edinburgh, Sept. 1829.

church in Scripture ; her exalted Head hath made ample provision for her enjoyment of this blessing under his wise and beneficent government ; and it holds a distinguished place among the promises which secure her spiritual restoration and prosperity. "Thus saith the Lord, I will turn my hand upon thee, and purely purge away thy dross, and take away all thy tin ; and I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning ; afterwards thou shalt be called the city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with righteousness, and her converts with judgment." This is secured by the residence of God in his church, and constitutes one of the most brilliant jewels in that crown which is formed by his glory shining upon her, according to the words before us : "In that day shall the Lord of hosts be for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of his people, and for a spirit of judgment to him that sitteth in judgment."

I propose, in the *first* place, to make some remarks on the warrants and nature of ecclesiastical judicature ; and, *secondly*, to consider the spirit in which it ought to be exercised, and which God has promised to confer.

I. In entering on the first head, I remark generally, that religious society has its foundation in the very nature of man considered as a social being. Men are bound to unite for the worship of their Creator, as well as for their mutual defence and external comfort ; and this view of religious society is antecedent in idea, or in the order of nature, to any particular form which it may receive from supernatural constitution or positive ordinances. The church is a society called out of the world by grace, and organised for promoting the glory of God in the salvation and sanctification of fallen men. Viewed strictly in this specific character, its polity and order are entirely of supernatural institution ; but there are many things which belong to it under the general notion of a society, and are common to it with other societies, or which belong to it as a society having religion for its object. For these things the light of nature furnishes important directions, and is a sufficient warrant. Divine revelation takes the dictates of sound reason for granted, and refers to them in such terms of approbation as impose it upon us as a duty to be guided by them in those cases as to which the Scriptures are silent, or have merely laid down general rules.¹ The rites of Christian worship are of divine institution, but there are various external circumstances connected with their observance which are left to the regulation of human prudence exercised with a proper regard to decency and edification ; such as the times of assembling, the order in which the several parts of worship shall be celebrated, and the length of the services. The range of this class of objects is still more extensive in

¹ Luke, xiv. 5. ; x. 7. 1 Tim. v. 18. Acts, xiv. 17. Rom. i. 19, 20. 1 Cor. v. 1. ; xi. 13—15.

relation to the government and discipline of the church, as to which Divine wisdom saw it fit to be less minute and precise in its prescriptions. Every society, and consequently the church of Christ, the most perfect of societies, must have external bonds of union, rules of management, and, in short, all those means which are necessary to her preservation, or conducive to the ends of her erection. The essential principles of jurisprudence, which are founded on natural laws, are common to civil and ecclesiastical society ; and they dictate the observance of certain forms of process as safeguards to justice, and means of eliciting truth in dubious or controverted cases.

With these explanations, I proceed to observe, that Christ, as king of his church, hath appointed a government in her, and committed to office-bearers, under him, a power to execute his laws, and pronounce judgment according to them, for the preservation of order and peace, and the promoting of the interests of truth and holiness to his glory. "As my Father hath sent me, so have I sent you.—I appoint unto you a kingdom, that you may sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.—Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.—God hath set in the church, governments.—Do not ye judge them that are within ? But them that are without God judgeth.—Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.—Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves ; for they watch for your souls.—God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.—At the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall be established. And an oath for confirmation is the end of all strife."

The overlooking of the important ends to be served by the church as a visible society, is a capital error, or at least has been the source of many hurtful mistakes in our own, as well as in former times. Many seem to confine their views entirely to what is necessary for training up a number of individuals for eternal life ; the only wise God hath combined this with the maintenance of a public cause, to the advancement of his glory on earth ; and for this purpose has erected and maintains an organised and permanent association, which he has constituted the depositary of his truths, laws, and ordinances. Those institutions which tend directly to promote personal salvation and holiness, such as the word, sacraments, and prayer, could not be preserved in purity, or practised to edification, without the external administration of laws. Church members are not all true saints ; and such of them as are so, being renewed but in part, stand in need of counsel, restraint, and correction. But there is a higher reason than even this for ecclesiastical judicature ; it belongs to the administration of that kingdom which was given to Christ as Mediator, and constitutes an essential part of his glory as the lawgiver, judge, and king of the church. The divine government of the universe is conducted by laws adapted to the various orders of created beings. Though sin had not entered into our world,

mankind would have lived under the external regimen of law, if there had been no other reason for it than this, that an exhibition of the moral government of God might be preserved among them. In our law the sovereign is called the *Grand Justiciar*, and earthly kings, in general, rule and dispense justice in the remotest parts of their dominions, by means of the subordinate governors and judges whom they appoint. And in like manner, the authority of the church's king is exercised, and his glory illustrated, by the instrumentality of those who, in his name, dispense his ordinances and execute his laws. "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me; and he that despiseth me, despiseth him that sent me."

Ecclesiastical judgment may be viewed either materially or formally. It belongs to secular judges to expound or interpret the law of the country, and to apply it, or to pronounce sentence according to its precepts, in the particular causes which are brought under their cognisance. To ecclesiastical judges belong the interpretation of the laws of Christ, by a judicial declaration of truth in opposition to prevailing error, and of duty in opposition to prevailing sins; and the application of these laws to such cases as occur. This last branch includes the admission of individuals to the privileges of the church, or to public office in it, and the trying of such offences or scandals as may arise from time to time, together with the inflicting of censure on the offenders, from admonition to excommunication, or complete exclusion from ecclesiastical communion, in the case of church members, and to deposition, in the case of office-bearers.

Of the matters which come within the jurisdiction of church rule, I shall not speak farther at present; but it may be proper to be more specific as to its formal nature.

1. Ecclesiastical judgment is spiritual, in distinction from that which is civil or secular. The government of the church and the government of the state, with the judgment which is competent to those who respectively administer them, differ widely from one another.

They differ in their *origin*. Both indeed are derived from God, who is the original fountain of all authority and justice. But civil government is from God as Creator; ecclesiastical government from Christ as Mediator. The former holds of him as King of nations, the latter as King of saints. The law of nature, written on the hearts of all men, is sufficient to direct in all that is essential to the former; the latter is founded on the law supernaturally revealed in the Scriptures. Civil magistrates and judges are "the ministers of God;" ecclesiastical rulers are "the ministers of Christ," and pronounce judgment in his name, or by his authority. "Jesus said, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth."

They differ in their *objects*. Civil judgment is pronounced on things that pertain to this life and the external man—his property, his life, his liberty, or his good name; ecclesiastical judgment, on things that per-

tain to the welfare of the soul and to the life to come. If the former has to do with religious matters, it is either upon the ground that religion in general is conducive to the welfare of secular society, or because particular religious acts interfere with civil rights ; if the latter have to do with civil matters, it is only in so far as they relate to the conscience. If at any time the same actions, materially considered, fall under the cognisance of both jurisdictions, as in the case of theft or murder, the formal light in which they are judged by each is different ; the secular judicatory proceeds against them as *crimes*, which injure civil society ; the ecclesiastical as *scandals*, which mar the purity of the church.

They differ in their *ends*. The end of secular judgment, in subordination to the glory of God, is the external peace and temporal prosperity of men, or, as the apostle expresses it, "that we may live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness and honesty." The end of ecclesiastical judgment, in subordination to the glory of God by Christ, is the promoting of the spiritual and eternal interests of man, or, in the words of the same apostle, "that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."

They differ, so far as their subjects are concerned, in their *extent*. Civil judgment extends to all who belong to the commonwealth ; spiritual judgment is confined to those who have been embodied into a church state.

They differ in their *sanctions*, and in the *means* which they employ to accomplish their ends. Civil authority is supported by the power of the sword, ecclesiastical authority by the power of the word, or, as it is sometimes designed, of "the keys." By the former, judgment is executed on the delinquent, according to the nature of his crime, to imprisonment, banishment, confiscation of goods, or death ; by the latter, judgment is executed on the offender to admonition, rebuke, suspension from sealing ordinances, or excommunication.

In fine, even when the same offences fall under the cognisance of both judicatures, the *issue* may be different. The ecclesiastical judges may pronounce the highest spiritual sentence against one whom the secular authorities, in the exercise of prudent policy, may spare ; and the latter may inflict capital punishment on an individual whom the former may receive and absolve at the last hour, as in the case of a penitent murderer or traitor.

From these premises it follows, that, as there is an exercise of judgment in the church essentially distinct from that which is civil and criminal in the state ; so, on the one hand, the two jurisdictions, so far from being inconsistent with one another, are fitted for being mutually helpful in the advancement of objects common to both ; and, on the other hand, the ecclesiastical judicature, not being derived from the secular, is not subordinate to it, and is equally competent and necessary under Christian and Heathen rulers. Even during the Jewish dispen-

sation, under which civil and religious matters were more intimately conjoined than under the Christian, the two jurisdictions were kept distinct. A line of demarcation between the office of the civil judge, and that of the priest, was laid down in the Mosaic code; and in the arrangements "for the judgment of the Lord, and for controversies," made in the days of the reforming Jehoshaphat, we find Amariah the high priest appointed as president "in all matters of the Lord," and Zebadiah, the ruler of the house of Judah, "for all the king's matters."¹

2. Ecclesiastical judgment is ministerial and executive, not lordly or legislative. This property is implied in the titles and designations which the Scriptures give to those by whom it is exercised—ministers or servants of Christ, bishops or overseers, pastors or shepherds, and stewards, who, in the economy of a great family, act under the directions of their master and lord. It is apparent from the injunction of Christ to his disciples: "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them,—but ye shall not be so." And this language he used at the very time that he told them, "ye shall sit on thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."² Everything which approaches to supreme authority, and which implies lordship over the conscience or dominion over the faith of Christians, is to be refused as an encroachment on the sovereignty of the "one Lord" of the church, and an infringement of that "liberty wherewith he hath made her free."

Christ is the sole lawgiver in his spiritual kingdom; and the proper business of the office-bearers whom he hath appointed is to interpret and carry into execution those laws which he has given forth and enrolled in his statute-book. Nor is this inconsistent with their making acts which serve to regulate certain external circumstances connected with the worship of God and ecclesiastical discipline. This is a power intrusted to courts of pure law and justice among men, although they have no legislative authority. Provided such regulations do not encroach upon true Christian liberty, and are enacted, not from the thirst of domination and mere arbitrary will, but with the design of preserving order and promoting edification or uniformity, they are to be cheerfully obeyed; and even when they may appear inconvenient or less calculated to accomplish these ends, it is the duty of individuals to yield a practical submission to them, in order to avoid schism, scandal, or the contempt of lawful authority.

3. It is public and authoritative. There is a right of private judgment, called by divines the judgment of discretion, which belongs to all the members of the church, and extends to everything connected with religion, and among others to the decisions of ecclesiastical judicatories. But there must also be lodged, in every well-ordered society, a power of pronouncing by its proper organs, a public judgment for deciding disputes and controversies which may arise, and for determining the manner in which its affairs shall be conducted. This public judgment is not merely

¹ Deut. xvii, 8—12. 2 Chron. xix, 8—11.

² Luke, xxii. 25, 26, comp. verse. 30.

consultative and hortatory, but authoritative ; and when rightly formed, it is to be submitted to, not only because it is materially agreeable to the standard of Scripture, but also because it has been pronounced by an ordinance of Christ. "If he neglect to hear the church, let him be to thee as a heathen man and a publican." Hence we read of "the decrees ordained by the apostles and elders," copies of which were given forth, and "delivered to be kept ;" and the obedience yielded to them was attended with the happiest effects, for "so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily."¹

A public judgment as to matters of common concern does not destroy or set aside the right of private judgment. On the contrary, it is one means of protecting church-members in the enjoyment of that privilege, by preventing one or a few persons from lording over others, and securing to all those advantages which are to be enjoyed in a social state. It no doubt regulates and restrains the exercise of private judgment, so as to prevent it from interfering with the public good ; and were not this allowed, there would be an end of all society, both civil and religious, and men would return to a state of nature, or rather would be reduced to an unnatural state. Society has its rights, as well as individuals have theirs, and when the claims of the two interfere or clash, reason and revelation agree in teaching that the latter should yield to, and be controlled by, the former. At the same time, every equitable and wise government will respect the private judgment of individuals, and will make a wide distinction between those who, from motives apparently conscientious, oppose public decisions in a modest and peaceable manner, and those who manage a factious and disorderly resistance ; and, above all others, an authority which has to do with matters which more immediately relate to the conscience, would need to be tender on this head, and to refrain from enacting an approval of all its determinations. The church is not infallible in her decisions ; her authority is limited and ministerial ; "all synods or councils since the apostles' times, whether general or particular, may err, and many have erred ;" and upon these grounds alone, though there were no other, the right of dissent, protest, or remonstrance, both judicially and extrajudicially, ought to be conceded and kept sacred, although this is apt to be forgotten by those very societies which have derived their separate existence, and taken their discriminating designation, from the exercise of this right.

4. It is to be exercised by select persons set apart for this purpose, and not by the community of the faithful. He who "appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth," who made the sun to rule by day, and the moon and stars by night, who constituted man the superior of this lower world, giving him dominion over the beast of the earth, the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, who hath laid in human nature the principles and foundations of all reasonable authority—marital, paren-

¹ Acts, xvi. 4, 5.

tal, herile, and political—by whom kings reign and princes decree justice, even all the judges of the earth,—he is the author of “the ordinances of justice” in the church. We know, and are assured, from the analogy of all his works, that he could not be the author of what has the remotest tendency to produce confusion in that society which was purchased with the blood of his Son, and of which he hath made him head and lord.

“In the multitude of counsellors is safety,” in opposition to the danger incurred by him who relies on his own judgment, or the advice of one or two favourites ; but counsellors consist of a select number taken from many. It is not from a promiscuous multitude that we are to expect the wisest and most equitable decision. History shows that the rights of individuals have been more flagrantly violated, and that more unjust and cruel sentences have been pronounced, under democracies than under any other form of government. This is so evident, that almost every people have chosen, voluntarily, to commit the management of their affairs, and especially the administration of their laws, to a few. The due exercise of justice requires, in an eminent degree, deliberation, calmness, patience, impartiality, superiority to prejudice, and the knowledge of human nature as well as of law,—qualities which do not characterise the proceedings of a large assembly, composed of persons of every class, temper, and attainment. Surely those persons do not act advisedly, how good soever their intentions may be, who labour to introduce a democratic government into the church of Christ ; and it would require the clearest proof of a divine prescription to warrant the adoption of a mode of management which, judging according to common principles, is equally hazardous to justice, truth, and tranquillity. Unity and peace may be preserved for a time in such societies, provided they be small ; but in that case, the increase which has been promised to the church, instead of being prayed for as a blessing, would need to be deprecated as a curse. If harmony has been maintained for a considerable period in churches where every question is submitted to the voice of the people, it will be found on examination, we apprehend, that this has been owing to the superior influence which one or a few individuals have acquired over the body, and that the government, though nominally popular and congregational, was really select and presbyterian, if not single and monarchical.

All rights in society imply corresponding duties, and require corresponding gifts. If a person has a right to rule, it is his duty to rule, and he must possess the requisite qualifications for discharging the task. But it seems difficult to say which is greatest, the absurdity or the hardship of the assumption, that every one who is admitted to the benefits of a society, shall be bound and capacitated to take an active share in its public managements. May not a person be both an honest and useful servant in a family, and yet not be fit for occupying the situation of a steward, or for being consulted, and having his vote

taken, as to the economy of the household? The capacity of conducting one's self in a private station, and the capacity of conducting public affairs, surely are distinct things. Every Christian is capable of understanding the things that pertain to his salvation; but it does not follow from this that he is qualified for feeding the flock of God. It is not necessarily required of every church member that he be able to rule a family well; but if he be incapable of this, "how shall he take care of the church of God?" The ascended Head of the church "gave gifts to men;" but does it appear, either from Scripture or experience, that he bestowed the gift to rule upon all who believe on him? The New Testament uniformly speaks of persons who rule in the church, in distinction from those who obey; but with what propriety of speech can those be called rulers who are permitted to do nothing without the express consent of the whole, or the majority, of those who are bound to obey them? It is no valid objection to this reasoning, that the Scriptures speak of acts of jurisdiction as proceeding from the church. Rulers are the instituted organs of the church, by whom its will is declared. In common language, that is said to be the deed of a community which has been done by its office-bearers or representatives. Great Britain declared war against France, made peace with Spain, entered into an alliance with Austria and Russia, abolished the slave trade. In like manner that is often ascribed in Scripture to the congregation, and the whole congregation, which was really transacted, and judicially determined, by their elders, heads, or princes.¹

Lastly, it is to be exercised by them jointly, and in parity. The only monarchical power in the church is exercised by Jesus Christ. She acknowledges but "one Lord." No individual on earth is entitled to pronounce judgment by his single authority, either universally as pope, or over a national church as primate, or over a diocese as bishop. From the very nature of the work, the Gospel must be preached, and the sacraments administered, by pastors singly; but to warrant them to proceed to acts of jurisdiction, even in particular congregations, they must be associated with other elders, whose office it is to "rule," though they do not "labour in word and doctrine."² The promise of the divine presence and blessing is made to such assemblies: "Where two or three are met in my name, there am I in the midst of them to bless them." In primitive times "elders" were accordingly ordained in every city. Though an apostle, Paul associated the presbytery, or eldership, with himself in the act of ordination.³ And the incestuous person at Corinth was not excommunicated by his sole authority: "sufficient to such a man is this punishment inflicted by many."⁴ As in all judicial proceedings, the office-bearers of the church are bound to act conjunctly, so they possess equal power. There was no primacy or even superiority of

¹ Exod. xii. 3, comp. verse 21; Num. xxxv. 12, 24, 25, comp. Deut. xix. 12, and Josh. xx. 4, 6; 1 Chron. xiii. i., comp. verses 2, 4; 1 Chron. xxix. i., comp. xxviii. i.; 2 Chron. i. 3, comp. verse 2.

² 1 Tim. v. 17.

³ 2 Tim. i. 6, comp. 2 Tim. iv. 14.

⁴ 2 Cor. ii. 6, 7.

office-power among the apostles. The least appearance among them of a disposition to acquire pre-eminence was strictly prohibited and severely reprov'd by Christ : "He that is greatest among you shall be your servant. One is your master, and all ye are brethren."

Such being the nature and the objects of the judgment which belongs to the office-bearers of the church, it is apparent that they require qualifications of no common kind. Let us, therefore, proceed to consider,

II. The spirit which is requisite for the exercise of ecclesiastical judgment, and which is promised in the text. Jesus Christ is not only the exemplar, but also the fountain of all qualifications for ruling in the church. It was prophesied, "The Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord ; and shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord : and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears : but with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth : and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked."¹ As the Head of the church he bestows these gifts ; and to the Holy Spirit belongs the communication of them in point of efficiency.

1. I begin with the fear of the Lord, or a deep sense of religion. This is the ground into which all the other qualities must be wrought, in order to form the character of one who "behaves" himself as he ought in the house of God, which is the church of "the living God." It is the beginning of all wisdom, and the germ from which every public virtue springs. No gifts, how eminent soever, will compensate for the want of this. A godless person may be expected to prove an unfaithful steward and unjust judge. If in secular society, "he that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of the Lord," the maxim applies with unspeakably greater force to that which is sacred. The manifestation of this quality is assigned as at once the reason of the powers conferred on Levi, and the security for his exerting them with success : "I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before me : the law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips ; he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity."²

2. The spirit of wisdom and understanding. A good heart and upright intentions are not enough here. Indeed, these will scarcely suffice in a private station ; for in this world all Christians need to be "wise as serpents," and to "walk circumspectly." But knowledge, prudence, and discernment, are peculiarly requisite for the management of public affairs. Those who are invested with office in the church

¹ Isa. xi. 2—4.

² Mal. ii. 6.

must be men "full of wisdom," as well as "of the Holy Ghost." They must be "well instructed in the kingdom of heaven." They require also a competent knowledge of the world, that they may "walk in wisdom toward them that are without;" and of human nature, for Christians are men of like passions with others; and the Spirit of God, by his supernatural influence, raises and purifies, without forcing or superseding the operation of the natural faculties. Ministerial gifts are distributed with a wise variety. "Unto one is given the word of knowledge;" an accurate and sound acquaintance with the doctrines and ordinances of religion. "Unto another is given the word of wisdom;" a judicious and comprehensive perception of what ought to be done for the advancement of truth and the edification of the body in existing circumstances. One can lay down the law with clearness; another can state the question with precision, sift the evidence, and apply the law to the fact. Let both abound in their respective gifts, and let each honour and improve that of the other; for "the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal," and "the eye cannot say to the hand I have no need of thee, neither the hand to the feet, I have no need of you."

3. The spirit of disinterestedness and impartiality. This is "the spirit of judgment"—when the individual is sunk in the public functionary—when on crossing the threshold of the sanctuary, and ascending the seat of judgment, he forgets self and all worldly considerations. Those who judge for the Lord, must be denied to their own interest and honour and aggrandisement, and seek only the welfare of souls, the honour of Christ, and the enlargement of his kingdom. They must be exempt from covetousness, and superior to the sordid love of gain; "taking the oversight of the flock, not for filthy lucre's sake, but of a ready mind." Of such a spirit was Moses, who magnanimously refused Heaven's offer to make of him a great nation, and was ready to die for Israel. Such was Nehemiah, who for twelve years refused his salary as governor, "because the bondage was heavy upon the people." And such was the apostle of the Gentiles, who, treading in the high steps of these godly and patriotic rulers, could say, "Behold the third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not be burdensome to you; for I seek not yours, but you."

And to a disinterested spirit must be added impartiality. The balance of justice must be held with such an even hand, as that the sentence shall resemble that which "comes from his presence whose eyes behold the things which are equal;" and with this view a vigilant and unremitting guard must be kept over the working of those passions and affections which have a tendency to bias and mislead the judgment, though they should not corrupt the heart. Church officers need always to bear in mind that their courts are fenced by "calling on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth every man according to his work." There must be no accepting of persons in the distribu-

tion of justice—no favour shown on the ground of relationship, private friendship, or acquaintance, worldly rank or wealth, splendid gifts, eminent services, or even general character, how spotless and exalted soever it may be. While the man with the gold ring and gay clothing is not to be preferred to him who appears in vile raiment, the divine law, with stern impartiality, forbids the wresting of justice even in favour of the poor. “Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment; thou shalt not respect the person of the poor, nor honour the person of the mighty; but in righteousness shalt thou judge thy neighbour.”¹ Of this spirit must every one be “that sitteth in judgment.” A modest man will be induced to suspect and review his opinion, when he finds himself in a minority; and all due weight ought to be given to the sentiments of those who are superior in age, in talents, and in character; but on the seat of judgment, and in questions which involve sin and duty, justice and injustice, every one must act and answer for himself. “Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment.”²

O how difficult and rare is this union of disinterestedness and impartiality! “For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ’s.” Barnabas, though a “good man,” and disinterested above many, appears to have yielded to partiality in favour of a near relation; and those who “seemed to be pillars” have been found, when judgment was laid to the line and equity to the plummet, shaken and moved from the base of strict rectitude and integrity. But this spirit is promised in our text, and it has been exemplified, to the honour of religion, especially in times of reformation. It was the manifestation of this spirit which drew the inspired eulogy and benediction on the tribe of Levi, from the dying lips of the lawgiver of Israel: “Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters at Meribah: who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him, neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children. They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law. Bless, Lord, his substance, and accept the work of his hands; smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.”³

4. A spirit of patience and meekness. It is only by a cool, patient, and dispassionate examination, that a judge can come to a sound decision on any cause. Those who judge in the Lord’s matters must not spare themselves, nor be niggardly of their time, attention, and labour. Nothing is more unbecoming than sallies of passion, or fits of impatience, on the bench; for he who cannot rule his own spirit, is unfit to govern others. “The man Moses was meek above all the men on the face of the earth,” and therefore qualified for taking the charge of a froward and rebellious people. The office-bearers of the church may

¹ Lev. xix. 15, comp. Exod. xxiii. 3.

² Exod. xxiii. 2.

³ Deut. xxxiii. 8—11.

lay their account with having both their temper and their patience tried by unreasonable and unruly men, who despise dominion, and are not afraid to speak evil of dignities! for all men have not faith, and even those who have it are often peevish, prejudiced, and pragmatical, and sometimes self-willed, heady, and high-minded. When differences have arisen in churches, about matters perhaps in which conscience had no concern, when personal interest or family honour has become involved, when parties have been arranged, when faction has raised its many-coloured banner, and discord, with its hoarse trumpet, has proclaimed, "To your tents, O Israel," O what sad discoveries have been made! How inconsistently have even good men acted! and with what recklessness have they given their principles, their professions, and their vows to the winds! In the midst of this storm, "the servant of the Lord," possessing his soul in peace, "must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those who oppose themselves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth."

5. The spirit of holy resolution and courage. The servant of the Lord will never forget that the power given to him is "for edification, not destruction;" those who have been overtaken in a fault, he will be disposed to "restore in the spirit of meekness;" nor will he exert the authority with which he is armed for "revenging all disobedience," until he has exerted every habile means for separating the deluded from the reprobate, and given them an opportunity to demonstrate their obedience.¹ But though not reckless of consequences, he deems the sacrifice of truth and equity too great for the peace even of the church. A judge must be rigidly, sternly tenacious of the right, which he must not yield either to the threats of the tyrant, or the clamours of a misguided populace. Better that the tribunal should be dyed with his blood, than that it should be profaned by one unjust sentence. *Fiat justitia, ruat cælum.* Those who are most gentle, and patient, and forbearing, while forbearance is a duty, will be most firm and undaunted when called upon to resist the evil spirit, who has broken through the sacred enclosures of the church, and is laying waste all its pleasant things. Who more self-denied, and patient, and condescending than the apostle who "became all things to all men?" But who more fearless, and resolute, and uncomplying than he, when the purity of the Gospel, the liberty of Christians, and the authority which he exercised in the name of his Divine Master, were at stake, and in danger of being lost, tarnished, or brought into discredit?² "Deal courageously," said Jehoshaphat to the judges, "and the Lord shall be with the good."³

Lastly, the spirit of humility and dependence on God. Secular judges, when they take their seat on the bench, appear in their robes of office. The garb in which those who sit on "the judgment of the Lord" should appear, is humility, in the sight of God of great price,

¹ 2 Cor. x. 6.

² 2 Cor. x. 1—11; xiii. 1—3, 10.

³ 2 Chron. xix. 11.

and richer than scarlet or ermine. "Ye younger, submit yourselves to the elder; yea, all of you be subject one to another; and be clothed with humility." The cultivation of this grace is of the greatest utility for regulating the conduct of the ministers of Christ toward one another, by preventing those ungodly jealousies, worldly rivalries, and unseemly animosities which sometimes rise among them, to the scandal of religion, the vilifying of their office, and the quenching of the Spirit. How disgraceful to see the servants of the meek and lowly Jesus striving, not for the faith of the Gospel, but for the mastery, provoking one another, not to love and good works, but to envy and every evil work, girding themselves, not with the armour of God, but with the instruments of unrighteousness, and converting the courts of the Lord's house into an arena for fierce debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults. But what saith the Scripture? "Let nothing be done through strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves." This appears a paradox to many; but it is so only to those who have not learned to "receive the kingdom of God as a little child." Humility is no less useful in regulating the conduct of ministers towards the Christian people, by keeping them from affecting dominion, and assuming those airs of authority which, instead of exalting their office and securing respect for their persons, uniformly tend to provoke resistance to the former, and to breed contempt for the latter. When at any time we may be in danger of being puffed up with pride, we have only to recollect the humility with which our Divine Master conducted himself on earth, going in and out among his disciples as one that serveth. If we weigh the momentous nature of our office against the honours which may be attached to it, and consider our gifts in connection with the awful responsibilities which they impose, O how little reason shall we find for boasting or self-gratulation! Instead of being lifted up with pride, we will be humbled to the dust, and brought to the attitude and disposition of dependants, who have nothing but what they have received, and who need to be daily "receiving out of His fulness, and grace for grace." "Who is sufficient for these things?—Not I, but the grace of God which is with me."

Among the practical lessons which our subject furnishes, allow me to specify the following:—

In the *first* place, we may learn the great importance of ecclesiastical discipline, and of preserving it in its scriptural purity and primitive vigour. Evangelical and vital religion cannot flourish generally or permanently in any church where this is neglected. Discipline is to the church of Christ what a wall is to a city, when an enemy has taken the field. It serves the same purpose that a fence does to a garden; if it be broken down, or suffered to fall into disrepair, the boar from the forest, and the wild beast of the field, will enter, and

devour all that is beautiful or productive within. This is a subject which ought to come home with peculiar force to the consciences and feelings of all Christians dwelling in this favoured land. As marks of the true church, the reformers on the Continent specified the pure preaching of the word, and administration of the sacraments ; but, in addition to these, our reformers of Scotland, in their first Confession of Faith, described "discipline executed according to the word of God, as a certain and infallible sign of the true church." The establishment of a scriptural and efficient discipline in the Church of Scotland, at the very beginning of the Reformation, was her distinguishing glory, on account of which she was lauded and felicitated by foreigners, who desired to possess that blessing, but could not obtain it. As the want of this ordinance of the church's Head has produced the most mournful consequences abroad, so to the neglect or perversion of it at home may be ascribed, in a high degree, those corruptions as to faith, worship, and morals which have spread among ourselves, and which, more than once, have threatened to lay waste all our pleasant things. "Purity of doctrine and discipline," says one of our religious patriots, who "stood in the gap" at a critical period of our ecclesiastical history, "are like the twins of Hippocrates, who always sickened and recovered at the same time, and at last dwined and died together."

In the *second* place, we may see one duty incumbent on those who have devoted themselves to the public service of the church, or who are engaged in studies preparatory to the work of the ministry. To preach the Gospel is a principal part of their employment, but it is not the whole of it. It is possible that a person may be able to make a sermon which shall be both acceptable and edifying, and, after all, be but poorly qualified for "taking care of the church of God." It is true, as formerly hinted, that there is a diversity of gifts among ministers, and few excel in all ; yet they should "covet earnestly the best gifts," and labour to qualify themselves for every department of their function. Younger ministers should study ecclesiastical jurisprudence. They ought to make themselves familiar with those portions of the sacred oracles which relate to this subject ; and they will find, in the Pentateuch, the book of Proverbs, and the writings of the prophets, as well as in the New Testament, maxims and practical instructions, which will be of the highest use in directing them how to act among the people committed to their charge, and how to form a judgment on those questions on which they may be called to decide in deliberative assemblies. Next to the Scriptures, they should acquaint themselves with the authorised books of discipline, and the acts and proceedings of the best reformed churches, especially of the Church of Scotland ; and, adding observation to reading, they should give the closest attention to the proceedings of the judicatories to which they are admitted, availing themselves of the enlarged experience of their elder brethren, that so they may "purchase to themselves a good degree," and, their spiritual

senses being improved by exercise, they may be able rightly to divide the word of truth, and to discern between good and evil. It was a proposal made to the Synod of Dort, and which received the recommendation of that famous assembly, that students of divinity, after finishing their academical education, should, for some time before their ordination, attend the meetings of inferior church courts, to observe their modes of procedure, that, when admitted to the ministry, they might be better qualified for taking a share of ecclesiastical government. Permit me here to mention an observation made many years ago, that it had become a too common custom among young ministers, even in the Secession, to come up to the meetings of the supreme court rather to visit their friends, and enjoy themselves, than to attend on public business—a practice which could not fail to produce very hurtful effects ; and perhaps it was partly owing to this that congregations, in many instances, fell from their ancient laudable custom of furnishing ministers and ruling elders at a distance with the external means necessary to enable them to wait regularly on the judicatories. We trust that it will be long before this neglect of attendance shall prevail in our body. But we should take warning from past experience ; the evil creeps in imperceptibly, and when it has become general and inveterate, will resist and baffle every remedy.

In the *third* place, we may learn from this subject what care ought to be exercised in choosing and setting apart those who are to bear office in the church. The privilege granted to the Christian people, to choose their own pastors and elders, imposes an obligation on them to exercise it with serious deliberation and fervent prayer. There is not a stronger prejudice against the right of popular election than that which has been excited by the haste, the levity, and the capriciousness with which it has often been used. As congregations in many instances can only be partially acquainted with those to whom their choice is limited, and as they are but too apt to prefer the showy to the solid qualities, a higher responsibility rests on the judicatories of the church, to whom it belongs to pronounce a judgment on probationers for the holy ministry, both anterior and subsequent to their election. To them the charge is given, “Lay hands suddenly on no man ; be not partakers of other men’s sins.” The counsel anciently given by a heathen king, is not undeserving of the attention of a Christian synod : “Thou, Ezra, after the wisdom of thy God, that is in thine hand, set magistrates and judges, which may judge all the people that are beyond the river, all such as know the laws of thy God ; and teach ye them that know them not.”¹

In the *fourth* place, we may see the scriptural grounds of subjection to the authority, and obedience to the determinations of church rulers. These are, the divine institution of ecclesiastical government, the connection between it and the regal glory of Christ, and the salutary

¹ Ezra, vii. 25.

influence which it is calculated to exert upon all other divine institutions, as well as upon the peace, unity, order, purity, and general prosperity of the church as a visible and diffusive society. A base subjection of the conscience to human authority, and a blind and implicit obedience to the decrees of men, without bringing them to the test of the supreme and unerring standard, are equally unscriptural and irrational; but, on the other hand, those who cast off all subordinate and regulated authority in the church, and plead for a boundless liberty to act in all matters of religion according to the dictates of their own mind,—those who, though they profess to own authority in general, uniformly condemn its exercise when they themselves are the objects of it, or teach others to do so,—and those who cherish a morbid and sickly jealousy of all who are in public office, although they give the most unequivocal proofs of disinterestedness and moderation—are not actuated by the spirit of Christ and of God.

In the *fifth* place, our subject suggests suitable exercise on occasion of the meeting of ecclesiastical judicatories. It was a custom in the better times of our church, to set apart a day for fasting and prayer before the meeting of a general assembly, to entreat the divine countenance to its deliberations. We are afraid that, in the times in which we live, the same deep interest is not felt in the meetings of the courts of Christ by Christians of any denomination. Are the same fervent supplications now presented which used formerly to ascend from every pulpit, praying society, and family, for weeks before such an occasion as that which has brought us together? Do we need them less? Assuredly no. Have we less encouragement to offer them? Not, so long as the text remains in our Bibles. Let all, then, and especially those who are called to take part in the management of the public affairs of the church, humbly, fervently, and believingly plead that the Lord of Hosts may be to us for a spirit of judgment when we sit in judgment. “I have set watchmen on thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day or night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence; and give him no rest till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.”

In fine, reverend fathers and brethren, having received this ministry, let us take heed to it to fulfil it. Let us not faint, but stir up the gift of God that is in us. Let us set the Lord before us, and he will be at our right hand, to instruct and uphold us. Let us take heed to ourselves, and to the whole flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made us overseers, to feed the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood. Let us cherish, and in our deliberations display, that catholic and truly liberal spirit which will induce us to merge the particular interests of those congregations with which we are more immediately connected, in the general and common interests of the whole body for whom we are this day met to act. Let us remember that we

judge not for man, but the Lord, who is with us in the judgment,—that His glory is deeply concerned in what we do,—that the preservation of truth and righteousness, and the eternal well-being of precious souls, are concerned in it,—that, for aught we know, the interests of generations yet unborn may be involved in our deliberations,—that His eyes, which are as a flame of fire, are upon us,—and that we must, in a little, individually, and all of us at last, face to face, appear before a greater than any earthly tribunal, and give an account of the use we have made of every talent, and of the manner in which we have managed the sacred trust committed to us by the Lord of the church, who is now saying to each of us, “Behold, I come quickly ; hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

SERMON XVIII.

THE ASPECT OF THE TIMES.¹

"O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?"—DANIEL, xii. 8.

It is impossible for any person to look on the present aspect of Providence, with an observing, and especially a religious eye, without being persuaded that our lot has fallen on critical times, times which teem with important events affecting the interests of society in general, and of the church of God in particular. At no distant period, good men were inclined to hope that the existing agitation was on the surface of society, and that it would soon subside, and leave things in their former state of tranquillity. That day is gone by; and there are few, I believe, how opposite soever their opinions may be of the moral character of the times, who are not now come to the contrary conclusion, and who are not convinced that this ferment is increasing, that its exciting causes are deep and widely extended, that they are as yet but partially developed, and that many days must elapse before the storm shall have spent its rage, and the agitated waves wrought themselves into repose. The Christian, instructed in the course of Providence by a light shed on it from the volume of revelation, has reasons peculiar to himself for coming to this conclusion. He looks beyond the feeble arm and narrow counsels of men, to the arm and counsel of Him who has all events and all hearts under his absolute control, and who overrules them for the accomplishment of his holy and irrevocable purposes. He knows that the Lord has a controversy with the inhabitants of the land; he is persuaded that He will thoroughly plead the cause which is His own, and is prepared to expect that great changes on the frame of society, both civil and ecclesiastical, will usher in a flourishing state of that kingdom for the sake of which all kingdoms rise or fall. His eye is therefore directed to the operations of Providence; and though he knows that these are not the proper rule of what he ought to do in his station, yet he views them with the deepest interest; and, with the overpowering feelings of the wise and holy man in the text, he inquires, "*O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things?*"

These words belong to a vision with which Daniel was favoured on the banks of the Hiddekel, and which is described in the last three

¹ Delivered in May 1854.

chapters of his book. There appeared to him a man clothed in linen, who, after the prophet had recovered from the swoon into which he was thrown by the heavenly apparition, disclosed to him the future fates of the children of his people. Though some late interpreters have explained the greater part of the prediction in the eleventh chapter as referring to events happening under the Christian era, it seems most natural to apply it to the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes, the great enemy of God and of his ancient people. That was a time of great trouble to the Jews, and seemed to threaten their extermination as a people, and along with them the extermination of true religion.¹ This could not fail to oppress the devout and patriotic mind of Daniel, who was relieved, first, by a promise of deliverance to his people, and secondly, by the appearance of two new personages who inquired of the man clothed in linen, "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" Daniel "heard, but did not understand" the reply; and taught by this that the theme was too high for him, he turns his question from the time to the manner of the time. "Then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things—these wonders?" It is the language of humble, earnest, adoring inquiry and prayer, and expressive of the workings of a pious mind contemplating the afflictions of the church, and looking forward to their issue. Let us, looking up to the Spirit who leads into all truth, endeavour to improve it, proceeding upon the broad principle that "whatsoever was written aforetime was written for our learning," and keeping in view the analogy which pervades all the works of God.

"The works of the Lord are great; sought out of all that take pleasure therein." But there is a depth of wisdom and sovereignty about some of them, on account of which they may be characterised as "wonders," calling forth astonishment and awe and amazement in the minds of those who are most practised in the study of Providence. Among these are the calamities with which the church is sometimes assailed, and her interests brought into great and imminent peril. Let us, in the first place, contemplate some of these wonders; and in the next place, consider the temper and exercise which become us in contemplating them.

I. 1. It is a wonder that the church of God should be exposed to calamity. Of all the wonders in the procedure of Him whose way is in the sea, whose paths are in the mighty waters, and his footsteps untraceable, this is one of the greatest; and it has often excited the wonder of the world, and the astonishment of those who are best acquainted with his works. "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel." We might have expected that the people whom he had chosen for his heritage, separated from the world lying in wickedness, formed into a kingdom of priests, made the depositary of his lively

¹ Chap. xl. 13—25.

oracles, and blessed with his special residence and government, would be guarded by a special Providence from every rude assault, and made to dwell in peace under the shade of her Almighty protector. But it is otherwise. "My ways are not your ways, saith the Lord," "The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men, that they are vanity." The sufferings of the Son of God, when he was manifested in the flesh, were matter of infinite surprise to his friends, and of mortal offence to his enemies; and as he was, so must his church be in the world. "Behold I, and the children whom the Lord hath given me, are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts."¹

2. It is a wonder—a mystery, that the calamities to which she is exposed should sometime be so great and overwhelming. She is broken with breach upon breach. Deep calleth unto deep against her; all God's waves and billows pass over her. She is made to pass through fire and through water. Bereaved of her children, deserted by her friends, desolate, a widow and a captive, Zion, standing on the smoking ruins of her sacred habitation, has been heard to utter the bitter plaint, "Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow."² "For under the whole heaven hath not been done, as hath been done upon Jerusalem."³

How often has the purity of the church, which is at once her glory and her strength, been defaced by error and corruption! Her greatest enemies have been those of her own house,—her appointed or chosen guardians, who have been ringleaders in apostasy: such were the priests and the false prophets in Israel and Judah, and the false teachers who privily brought in damnable doctrines to the Christian churches. The hedge of discipline being broken down, the wild beasts have rushed in, treading down the pasture and polluting the streams, destined for the food and refreshment of the flock of God which he had purchased with his own blood. The furies of persecution have been let loose upon her. They have fired her sanctuary, burnt up all the synagogues of God in the land, slain her priests, given the bodies of her saints to the wild beasts, and scattered the remainder to the four winds of heaven.

3. It is a wonder that these calamities have come visibly from the hand of God, and are accompanied with evident tokens of his displeasure. This makes the stroke so heavy—that the enemy and the oppressor wields the rod of God's anger, and has received a commission against a hypocritical nation. This is the very gall of the bitter draught, converting it into a cup of trembling and astonishment. "O God, THOU hast cast us off, thou hast scattered us, thou hast been displeased—thou hast showed thy people hard things; thou hast made us to drink the wine of astonishment."⁴ The indignation of man they could bear, the fury of the oppressor they could brave; but a sense of divine displeasure they feel to be intolerable. And the provocation

¹ Isa. viii. 18.² Lam. i. 12.³ Dan. ix. 12.⁴ Ps. lx. i. 3.

cannot be small, which induces the Lord to forsake his house, to leave his heritage, to give the dearly beloved of his soul into the hands of her enemies.

4. The duration of the calamity is another wonder. It sometimes continues until the strength of the friends of religion is gone, and their hope is ready to give up the ghost. "How long!" has often been the utterance of the groan which has come from the bottom of the heart of the suffering church. "How long, O Lord! is it for ever?" "How long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?"¹ But this was a short period, compared with that during which the witnesses for the truth suffered from Antichrist—twelve hundred and sixty years. Hence the loud cry of the souls of the martyrs under the altar, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth."²

Lastly, it is a wonder that her calamities produce so little effect. The judgments with which God visits his church are intended for her benefit and reformation, for correction and purification. If they were seen to work the peaceable fruits of righteousness, awakening consideration, producing humiliation, and leading to repentance, and to the putting away of whatever has procured the divine displeasure, they might be borne with patience, and even joyfulness. But, alas! it is often otherwise, and judgments, instead of softening, harden the heart. This was what God had to complain of in his ancient people: "Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more."³ This was what led the prophet to despair of the recovery of the people committed to his charge: "O Lord, thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction."⁴ And still more strongly: "The bellows are burnt, the lead is consumed in the fire; the founder melteth in vain; for the wicked are not plucked away: reprobate silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them."⁵

Having mentioned these things in general, I now proceed to specify some particulars in our present situation which furnish ground of anxious wonder. The church of God, in our day, is not subjected to persecution, as in former times; the judgments inflicted on her are of a spiritual character, but they are not on that account the less alarming. In fact, they are the severest of all, as they immediately affect the internal interests of the church. And here many things appear which are portentous, and calculated to excite anxiety as to the issue.

1. It is a dark and portentous spot in our sky that the progress of knowledge should be accompanied with so much infidelity and irreligion. At the era of the Reformation, learning was the handmaid of religion, attended her wherever she went, and did her willing homage. The most learned men were then the most pious, and those who examined

¹ Zech. i. 12.² Rev. vi. 10.³ Isa. i. 5.⁴ Jer. v. 3.⁵ Ib. vi. 29, 30.

the Bible with the most critical accuracy were most deeply imbued with its spirit. Infidelity was unknown within the pale of Protestantism. How different now ! Though the Bible has been more extensively circulated than in any former age, and the means of instruction are ample, yet impiety and profaneness are on the increase. The Scriptures are treated, in a great measure, as a profane or common book, even by those who make them the object of their special study. Science has long ago declared herself independent of religion, and courts an alliance with infidelity rather than revelation. The time seems to be fast approaching when Christianity will be divorced from education, and there is reason to fear that knowledge, instead of being, as hitherto, the stability of our times, will prove the source of our weakness, and the means of our ruin.

2. Another ominous cloud in our horizon is the engrossing attention to politics, and the indifference or aversion shown to religious privileges amidst the struggle for those of a civil nature. In former times, especially in our own land, the cause of civil and religious liberty, of political and ecclesiastical privileges, was identified. They had common friends and common foes. Those who opposed regal despotism and arbitrary power in the state, withstood the ecclesiastical supremacy and Erastian encroachments on the church ; and the same parliament which had successfully vindicated its own freedom and privileges, removed the yoke of patronage from the church's neck, and left it free for her ministers to be admitted "upon the suit and calling of the congregation." Need I say how different it is at this day ? Those who are loudest in their cry for political privileges, in parliament and out of it, are not only indifferent about ecclesiastical privileges, but are the most determined foes to them. And those churchmen, who derive their distinctive name from the people, and who, under God, owe all to the voice of the people, are too generally hostile to popular rights. Not satisfied with having the yoke imposed by state authority, it must be riveted by church authority, and by means of the golden screw of a *veto* ; and as the name of the instrument is Roman, it must, I suppose, have a Roman inscription too, *Esto perpetua*. Really our friends of the Establishment ought not to be surprised that Dissenters are moving a disjunction of Church and State, when they themselves are pleading for the separation of civil and ecclesiastical privileges, and insisting that there is no analogy between them.

This feature of our times augurs ill for the continuance or successful operation of our civil privileges. Rarely, if ever, have a people retained for any long time their enjoyment of civil liberty, when strangers to that which is of a religious character ; nor can we expect the blessing of Heaven upon it, unless it is employed for the advancement of the interests of Christ's kingdom.

3. Here is another wonder, that those who had so long pleaded for a national reformation of religion, should have abandoned that plea, at

the very time when Providence seemed to present the opportunity of prosecuting it with some prospect of success. This is the great Voluntary spot in our ecclesiastical horizon. Though the rigorous enforcement of the law of patronage was the immediate cause which drove the first Seceders from the Established Church, yet they did not propose, by their association, merely to obtain the redress of that evil ;—they associated together for the more liberal object of seeking a reformation of religion in Britain and Ireland, agreeably to the word of God, the subordinate standards of the church, and the national covenants. This reformation they distinguished, in their Testimony and other public deeds, into civil and ecclesiastical ; meaning by the former, the removal of all laws in the state which are injurious to the true religion, and the substitution of others which are calculated to advance the interests of truth and righteousness. For a long time there was no prospect of their obtaining this object, in consequence of an obstinate refusal on the part of rulers to make any alteration on the existing constitution and laws. Of late, however, a change of a very extensive kind has taken place, which, though limited to political matters, involves a principle equally applicable to matters which are materially and objectively religious and ecclesiastical ; a change, too, which has given an opportunity for the expression of public opinion, to a degree perhaps unexampled in this country, certainly not enjoyed since the Revolution. Now here is the wonder, that at this very time, so favourable to the object of their association, the great body of Seceders should have avowedly abandoned the object which they had in view, and advanced a principle which declares that the advancement of religious reformation is an unfit object of national concern, and that all connection between church and state, religion and politics, is unscriptural and antichristian ;—in short, that they should have adopted that very principle which defeated the Reformation happily begun in Britain and Ireland, at that period which they, in their public declarations, fixed upon as a pattern of imitation !

4. It is a wonder that a spirit of determined hostility against the religious establishments of the country should have displayed itself, at the very time when a revival of evangelical religion began to make its appearance in them, and internal exertions were making to reform their abuses. You will not understand me as insinuating that there are not corruptions in our northern establishment which justify secession. But it cannot be denied, and we should be glad to acknowledge, that favourable symptoms have of late appeared of a revival in that church. Though we have no reason to think that error has been banished from the national church, yet, compared with former times within the memory of some still alive, it may be said, that as ashamed it hides its head. The Socinian heresy is no longer avowed ; and the cold, deadening strain of legal preaching, once so general, has been banished from many pulpits. That selfish system of religion, which would confine all

concern to the salvation of the soul and personal godliness, and which once was so prevalent among serious persons, has suffered a sensible abatement, and together with it, the latitudinarian tenet, which represents all contendings for discipline, and even modes of faith, as unnecessary, if not hurtful. A spirit of concern for the public interests of religion and the reformation of abuses in the church, has been excited in quarters where it did not formerly exist. The attention of Christians has been turned to those periods in the history of the church in our land, in which the work of reformation was advanced to a high pitch, and which furnish, in particular, the brightest examples of ministerial diligence, faithfulness, and zeal. To speak with respect of our national covenants is no longer an exclusive mark of a Seceder, and even their obligation on our land is acknowledged by not a few, who lately would have scouted, or at least stared, at the assertion.

Now it certainly appears strange that, in such circumstances, which were calculated to propitiate the favour of all the friends of religion, and especially of Seceders, such hostility should have been manifested towards all establishments, and that the efforts of its enemies to overturn them should seem to keep pace with those of their friends to render them more worthy of being supported.—But we will take a very partial view of the subject, if we confine our attention to the motives of the assailants. The great thing which should engage our thoughts, is the language of Providence, and the displeasure which it is expressing at the long continuance of a course of measures in the national church, which has alienated the great body of the people, and induced them to despair of ever seeing a thorough reformation of abuses which they have been taught to consider as the necessary consequences of an establishment.

5. It is a wonder that the late revival of evangelical doctrine should have been followed and checked by enthusiastical extremes. On these it is unnecessary that I should dwell ; but one of them is so closely connected with the subject of our present discourse as to merit particular notice.

A serious inquiry into the predictions of the Bible is inseparable from the duty of searching the Scriptures, and forms part of that homage which we owe to Him who, as a proof of his sole divinity, describes himself as “declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done.” To trace the marks of Divine wisdom and prescience in the exact correspondence between the prediction and the event, in prophecies which have already received their fulfilment, is a task at once pleasing and profitable. Nor are our inquiries bound down precisely to fulfilled predictions. The Old Testament prophets inquired and searched diligently into the time and manner of time of which the Spirit which was in them did testify ; and we learn from the example of Daniel, who understood by books the period of Jerusalem’s desolation, that they were not restricted, in the

conclusions to which they came, to supernatural communications. But inquiries into the future, even when conducted with the help of the torch of prophecy, ought to be characterised by modesty and devout sobriety. Here, it would seem, the common maxim applied to knowledge, "Drink deep, or taste not," needs to be reversed. We should always recollect, that prophecy lifts off the veil which covers futurity but partially ; or, to speak more correctly, it throws over those objects which it reveals a veil which, while it prevents us from seeing them clearly, admonishes us to check our curiosity by a believing and humble patience.

The neglect of this rule has introduced into this department of study a rashness and presumption, productive of great injury to the minds of individuals, and to the cause of religion in general. By attempting to fix the exact period at which certain predictions shall receive their accomplishment, and by putting arbitrary and fanciful interpretations on the language of prophecy, the Scriptures have been exposed to the derision of infidels, the confidence of professing Christians in the certainty of the word of God has been shaken, and the minds of many have been withdrawn from the great truths of the Gospel, and the active discharge of the duties of their station. Almost all the extravagant opinions and practices of the present day may be traced to this origin. Hence it is that some, from being interpreters of prophecy, have set up for prophets themselves, or have encouraged others in the delusive notion that they possessed the prophetic spirit, or other gifts connected with it ; and hence it is that, notwithstanding the express premonition of our Lord, "The kingdom of God cometh not with observation ;" and, "if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ ! or lo, there ! believe it not"—the minds of not a few are directed to an imaginary appearance and visible reign of the Son of man on earth, to the exclusion of all due regard to his first coming, when he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and his second coming at the end of the world, without sin, unto the salvation of them that look for him.

6. We may only advert farther, on this head, to the wonder that the friends of truth and reformation should be so divided in sentiment and communion. Considering that these are so feeble in point of numbers, and that the force of their public testimony depends so much on their united exertions, it is truly surprising that so little of a spirit of enlightened and scriptural union should exist among them ; and that so generally they should be on the watch to increase their own little parties, by fishing in disturbed waters, and picking up treasures from the wreck of ruined establishments.

II. I proceed now to consider the exercise and conduct which become us in contemplating and inquiring into these wonders. Cold speculations about the mystery of Providence, how clear and correct soever they may be, are as unprofitable, I should say pernicious, as when they

have for their object the mystery of redemption. In both cases, the speculatist perishes like the philosopher who was frozen to death while making observations on the weather and the heavenly bodies within the frigid zone. The men of Issachar are praised for their "understanding of the times;" but it is added, "they knew what Israel ought to do;" and what their hands found to do, they did it with all their might.

1. Our inquiries into the wonders of Providence in our time should be conducted with holy adoration of the doings of God. This is a feeling which the student of Providence needs always to preserve and cherish in his breast. He may expect to meet at every turn with something which is strange and startling, and to him unaccountable. "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" It is peculiarly necessary to keep this feeling alive in the time of affliction, personal or public. To justify God when he is measuring out hard things to us—to entertain favourable thoughts of him—to celebrate his holiness, righteousness, and sovereignty, when we are smarting under his rod—is no easy task. O'tis difficult in such circumstances (and that the best of his saints have found it) to avoid misconstruing his conduct, by drawing rash and hasty conclusions from it—to keep from murmuring and repining, and charging God foolishly; and still more difficult is it to glorify him in the fires, and to say, "He hath done all things well!"

Yet this is our duty—our high duty; and if we fail here, no part of our exercise can be right—all is marred. Holy Jeremiah was deeply sensible of this; and, therefore, before pouring out his complaint to God, and inquiring into the causes of the great anger which had gone forth against the cities of Judah, he reminds himself of the divine rectitude, and protests that nothing which he might utter in the agony of grief, or in the ardour of expostulation, should be understood as insinuating the slightest reflection on that immaculate and bright attribute. "Righteous are thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments."¹ Of the same import are the words of another prophet: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity: wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?" And hence the enlightened conclusion to which he came (for it is when we are in the attitude of adoration that we see farthest into the mystery of Providence): "Art thou not from everlasting, O Lord my God, mine Holy One? We shall not die. O Lord, thou hast ordained them for judgment; and O mighty God, thou hast established them for correction."²

To maintain this becoming frame of spirit, let us meditate on the infinite distance between God and us—his majesty and our meanness,

¹ Jer. xii. 1.

² Hab. i. 12, 13.

his sovereign propriety and our absolute dependence, his uncontrollable authority and our unconditional subjection, his wisdom and our ignorance, his purity and our vileness, the eternity of his plans and the yesterday conception of ours. And let us call in to our aid the recollection of his dealings with his church in former times, and the wonderful manner in which he has made the darkest dispensations to produce the happiest and most glorious results.

2. The contemplation of these wonders calls for deep humiliation. No man will ever give glory to God by owning the righteousness of his judgments, until he is brought to a due sense of his own sinfulness, and humbled on account of it; nor will the Holy One remove the tokens of his displeasure from an individual or a people, so long as they remain proud and impenitent. This is the ordinary rule of his procedure, as solemnly announced from ancient times: "If they shall confess their iniquity, and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against me, and that also they have walked contrary unto me; and that I also have walked contrary unto them; if their uncircumcised hearts be humbled, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity: then will I remember my covenant—and I will remember the land."¹ This was the exercise to which they were brought, when God turned again the captivity of Zion. In this way was Daniel employed, when the commandment to rebuild Jerusalem came forth. "I set my face," says he, "unto the Lord my God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting and sackcloth and ashes, and I prayed unto the Lord my God, and made my confession."² Such was the exercise to which the captives were brought collectively, as we see in the fast which they proclaimed at the river Ahava, "to afflict themselves before their God, and to seek of him a right way."³ Such was their exercise repeatedly after their return, when involved in transgression; they solemnly confessed their sin, and renewed the covenant of their fathers. In this manner was fulfilled the prediction: "In those days and at that time, saith the Lord, the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah together, going and weeping; they shall ask the way to Zion with their faces thitherward, saying, Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."⁴

And thus it was eminently in our own land in times of reformation, and particularly after seasons of defection. Those who are acquainted with the history of our church, know that on these occasions her breaches were repaired, and her lost privileges recovered, amidst deep acknowledgments of sin, and the renewal of early-plighted but violated vows. Our land exhibited the picture of a Bochim, before she put on the appearance of a Hephzibah. The absence of this exercise on the deliverance wrought by God at the Revolution, was deplored by some of the best friends of the Church of Scotland. To this neglect of duty,

¹ Lev. xxvi. 40—42.

² Dan. ix. 3—8, 18, 14.

³ Ezra, viii. 21.

⁴ Jer. i. 4.

among other things, we must trace those evils which have wasted that church for a long century ; and it were little less than belying God's word to expect that we shall escape from these, so long as we remain unhumbled. The Lord of hosts is calling to weeping and mourning and fasting ; but behold, joy and gladness, eating flesh and drinking wine.

There is nothing more offensive to the Holy One than pride and self-confidence ; and yet how generally do these prevail ! The Secession Church has waxed vain of its numbers, and engaged in an attempt which is calculated to rob the King of kings of the homage due to him from the nations of the world, and to injure the best interests of society both civil and religious. On the other hand, the Established Church seems little less disposed to boast of her numbers, her endowments, her legal securities, and her exclusive possession of royal countenance. The latter charges the former with entering into an unholy alliance with infidels, heretics, and profane persons, for overthrowing establishments ; the former retorts that the latter retains persons of such characters within her pale. I enter not into an examination of the justice of these mutual criminations ; but I say, that between them there is an almost total want of that spirit which our conduct and our circumstances equally demand ; and that a proud and haughty tone to our fellow-creature covers a spirit of rebellion against the Almighty.

All parties and denominations have great reason for humbling themselves under the mighty hand of God, and deprecating his just and heavy displeasure. Those who may retain a profession and communion in some due degree of conformity to Scripture, have ground to mourn over their departure from first love, in the want of that spirit which animates, and that deportment which adorns, a confession of the name of Christ. " Nevertheless I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen ; and repent, and do the first works."

3. These wonders ought to be contemplated and inquired into in the exercise of fervent prayer. This is the language of the text, for every question put to God is a prayer. " O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things ? " Daniel meant to pray that God would preserve his people under the oppression which they were suffering, that he would keep them from fainting and apostatising, that he would refine them in the furnace, hasten the day of deliverance, and shorten the day of calamity for the elect's sake. And these things ought to form the matter of our prayers. It has been observed that when God intends any deliverance to his church, or revival of the interests of religion, he excites his saints to pray for this mercy ; and the remark is justified by sacred history. The experience of the holy man in our text may stand for that of a thousand. How fervently was he employed in prayer about the time when the restoration of the captivity took place ! " And whiles I was speaking," he says, " and praying and confessing my sin, and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before

the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God ; yea, while I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications, the commandment came forth, and I am come to show thee."¹ Let us all imitate the example of this greatly-beloved saint. "For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest. Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

4. Let us contemplate these wonders with firm faith in the preservation of the interests of religion, and the deliverance of the church. Prayer, unless it be believing, will not be prevalent. We must honour the power and faithfulness of God ; and what is prayer but the pleading of his promises ? "Do as thou hast said." Hence the language of David : "For thou, O Lord of hosts, God of Israel, hast revealed to thy servant, saying, I will build thee an house : therefore hath thy servant found in his heart to pray this prayer to thee. And now, O Lord God, thou art that God, and thy words be true, and thou hast promised this goodness to thy servant. Therefore now let it please thee to bless the house of thy servant."² But we will plead the promises coldly and formally if we do not believe them. We should view them as made, not only to the church, but to her divine Head ; and though we have no ground to assure ourselves absolutely that God will preserve any particular church, yet his promises secure the preservation, purification, enlargement, and perpetuity of the kingdom of his Son. And with faith, let us join the twin grace of patience by which it is supported ; "for the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak and not lie : though it tarry, wait for it ; because it will surely come, it will not tarry."

In conclusion, let me exhort all present to seek preparation for coming calamities and trials, whether of a private or public kind. Let none trust in an empty profession of religion ; or in the mere possession of religious privileges. This was the great error of the ancient people of God, and we often find the prophets warning them against "trusting in lying words, and saying, The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, are these."³ Seek a saving acquaintance with God, and a saving interest in his covenant. "Acquaint thyself now with God, and be at peace with him ; thereby good shall come unto thee." "Because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."

Let believers give all diligence to be found of Christ in peace at his coming. "Ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith,

¹ Dan. ix. 20—23.

² 2 Sam. vii. 27—29.

³ Jer. vii. 4.

praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."

The members of this congregation I would exhort to seek establishment in the present truth. After long examination, I am fully convinced that, by the good hand of God, you have been led, in respect of profession and communion, to take up your ground in the safe medium between the conflicting parties in the great controversy of the day, while you continue to testify against the corruptions of the churches established by law in our native land, and at the same time keep aloof from those who condemn all recognition of Christianity by public authority, and seek to withdraw the provision which has been made by the nation for religious purposes. I cannot flatter you with the prospect of the speedy removal of those defects in the national settlement of religion, or those practical abuses in ecclesiastical administration, which the body we are connected with have so long condemned, and which have excluded us from fellowship with the National Church in Scotland. I am sorry I cannot join with those who would give the name of *reforming* to the General Assembly, whose meeting is now drawing to a close. One party which has long had the management in the judicatories, and has ruled with sufficient rigour (I mean not against error or vice), has been defeated : how their successors will act remains still to be determined. In the mean time, their proceedings hitherto have not laid a foundation for sanguine hopes. One thing they have done which must meet our approbation, in removing that glaring anomaly on the Presbyterian constitution, chapels of ease. But an overture, involving a charge of error on a capital article of our religion, justification by faith, has been dismissed simply on the declaration of the accused individual, that he was perfectly sound on that head. The decision on Calls, so much applauded by many, together with its strange but not unsuitable accompaniments, I can look upon in no other light but as an attempt to gull the people with a show of privilege, while it subjects them to be fettered, at every step, in the exercise of it, and involves them in the inextricable meshes of legal chicanery. And this boon is presented to them by the hands of those who have scornfully thrown out and rejected their petitions for relief from a grievance of which the Church of Scotland has always complained ; and this at a time when the legislature, by which the yoke was imposed, had so far listened to similar petitions from the people, as to appoint a committee to inquire into the grounds of complaint, and to put the country to no small expense in conducting the investigation. I say it is more than suspicious that the alleged boon should be presented by the hands of those who have summarily and haughtily thrown out the petitions of the Christian people against patronage. They say they have muzzled the monster : it is a mistake ; they have only muffled him, and they have muzzled the people.

It gives me great pain to say these things, and I say them, not in anger, but in grief and in love. Nothing on earth would give more joy

to my heart, than to see sure and decided symptoms of reformation in the National Church of Scotland—to see the Zion of God in our land rising from the dust and shaking herself, putting on her beautiful garments, and looking forth, as in the morning of her day, “fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners,” to the confusion of those who would have quenched her light, and plucked her from that firmament in which she once shone with surpassing brightness. I would go seven times to the top of her highest mountain, to look out for the harbinger of her relief, though each time I should have to return with the message, “There is nothing,” provided at last I could hail the appearance of “the little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand,” the sure prelude of the plentiful rain, which shall refresh the weary inheritance, make her wilderness as Eden, and her desert as the garden of the Lord.

Do not despair, neither be discouraged, my brethren. There is abundance in the promise. Wait in faith and patience and prayer for its accomplishment. God hath done great things for Scotland ; and he hath not suffered them to be forgotten. He hath reserved for himself a remnant, both in the Established Church and out of it, who think with gratitude and praise of his wonderful works. This is a token for good. And when he hath tried and humbled them, and led them to the exercise of prayer and confession,—“Then will the Lord be jealous for his land, and pity his people.”

SERMON XIX.¹

GRIEF FOR THE SINS OF MEN.

“ Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law.”—

PSALM cxix. 136.

It is no rare spectacle to see a person in tears. Man is the heir of trouble, the child of sorrow, which assails him in a thousand forms. If exempt for any time from suffering in his own person, his sympathies are continually called forth by the afflictions of others to whom he is linked by the bond of a common nature, and by the more tender ties of kindred and friendship. How often do we see the “face foul with weeping” for the loss of a parent, a brother, a child, or a husband ; and scarcely has the mourner washed himself and dried up his tears, when some new calamity causes them to flow afresh ! The inquiry which we are ready to make on such occasions, What ails thee ? Why weepest thou ? does not express our surprise at the sight, but our desire, whether dictated by curiosity or benevolence, to ascertain the cause of the distress.

But, my brethren, the text presents us with a spectacle which is rare indeed, and which, though far from unreasonable, is calculated to excite very general surprise—a man whose heart was pierced, and from whose eyes the tears streamed, not on account of any bodily pain, or domestic trial, or worldly loss, but on account of the violations of God’s law which he witnessed around him. David had met with heavy calamities of a temporal kind, and on these occasions we behold the keen sensibilities of the man blended with the confidence and submission of the saint. When persecuted by Saul as a traitor, when forced to flee from his capital by the unnatural rebellion of Absalom, or when informed of the unhappy death of that undutiful but beloved son, we can account for his grief on common principles. But when he composed this lengthened and beautiful piece of devotion, which expresses throughout the calm but intense breathings of delight in the law or revealed will of God, felt and cherished in the hours dedicated to uninterrupted and fixed meditation,—he appears to have been free from all the ordinary causes of distress and sorrow. The afflictions which he had suffered were recol-

¹ Preached on the occasion of a Synodical Fast, Feb. 1828.

lected by him only as affording grounds of thanksgiving on account of the spiritual benefit he had derived from them. The attempts of his enemies, and the bitter scorn with which they had assailed him, were thought of only to enhance his esteem for those statutes, the study of which had made their envenomed darts to fall harmless at his side. Yet while enjoying that "peace which passeth all understanding," and which is the blessed portion of those who love God's law, there was one thing which pained him, which was an alloy to his happiness, which we find him repeatedly lamenting in the course of the psalm, and which occasioned him more poignant grief than all the personal and domestic trials under which his heart had formerly bled. His righteous soul was vexed from day to day by the frequent, open, bold, and persevering transgressions which he saw and heard of. "I beheld transgressors, and was grieved." "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law."

Grief for sin is one of those charities of the heart whose operation begins at home. He who has never seen his own sin, who has not been grieved for it, and wept over it, cannot feel grief for that of others. There is sympathy implied in sorrowing for the sins of others; and we cannot feel deeply for those distresses to which we are utter strangers in our own persons. Without this personal experience, we may weep, but will not grieve; and our tears will, at the very best, be theatrical and professional. Nay, they will pass for gross hypocrisy with Him who sees the heart. There is great danger of self-deception here. We are apt to flatter ourselves that we hate sin, when we condemn or bewail it in the conduct of others, while, in reality, we are only indulging a splenetic, censorious, or fretful disposition. Self-love, too, conceals from us the guilt or turpitude cleaving to our actions, which we clearly see in the same or similar actions done by others. When David heard the story of the poor man and his ewe-lamb, he could not repress the sentiments of indignation which rose in his breast against the hard-hearted oppressor; but what an appalling discovery was made to him when the prophet said, "THOU art the man!" The spoiler of the poor man was forgotten, and his deed, base as it was, swallowed up and lost in that of the ravisher of Bathsheba and the murderer of Uriah. "I have sinned." He felt as if there had not been another sinner in the world. The sacrifice of a broken spirit is pleasing to God; but it must be offered, like those of the priests under the law, "first for our own sins, and then for the people's."¹

But this gracious principle, while it begins at home, must not end there. It must be liberal and diffusive; and its diffusiveness is one mark, and no small or accidental one, of its genuineness. The exercise described in our text was not peculiar to David. We find it displayed in the recorded experience of the most distinguished saints in Scripture.

¹ Heb. vii. 27.

Of Lot we are told that he was "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds."¹ Isaiah exclaims, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips."² Jeremiah has been called the weeping prophet, because his writings were bedewed with tears, produced, not merely by "the destruction of the daughter of his people," but by the wickedness and rebellion which brought it upon her. "Mine eye," saith he, "runneth down with rivers of water—mine eye trickleth down, and ceaseth not, without any intermission."³ We see the same spirit manifested by Paul, and by one greater than them all—the "Man of Sorrows," who showed his acquaintance with this as well as other causes of grief, by weeping over the unbelief, the obduracy, and the wickedness of men.

If we mourn for sin truly, it will excite our grief wheresoever and by whomsoever it is committed. But, like all our sympathies, it will be excited more powerfully by the sins of those with whom we are more intimately connected, and by such of them as come more immediately within the sphere of our own observation. We are to mourn more especially, though not exclusively, for the sins of our own land, of the city in which we dwell, of the church with which we are in immediate fellowship, of the congregation of which we are members, and of our own families.

Having made these general reflections, let us now, in the *first* place, trace these rivers of grief to their springs; and in the *second* place, specify some of the leading qualities of this grief.

I. Let us trace these rivers of grief to their springs.

1. Grief for the sins of men springs from love to God. Every saint feels a lively interest in the honour of God, arising from the knowledge which he has of his infinite excellence, the experience which he has had of his boundless goodness, and the supreme delight which he takes in him as his all-sufficient and everlasting portion. Sin is a violation of the authority of God, and an offence to the essential purity of his nature. It insults his majesty, and reflects dishonour (so far as a created act can do) upon all his attributes. How strong and impressive is the language which God in condescension employs when speaking of the conduct of sinners in reference to himself. They make him a liar, deny him, reproach him, lift up the heel against him; he is limited by them, made to serve, robbed, wearied, tempted, provoked, vexed, grieved, broken, pressed under them as a cart is pressed under sheaves. Now all the saints feel as he feels. They feel as a dutiful subject, servant, child, or wife feels, when a gracious prince, kind master, liberal benefactor, indulgent parent, or affectionate husband, is dishonoured or ungratefully used. Every letter of his name, every work of his hand, every word of

¹ 2 Pet. ii. 7.

² Isa. vi. 5.

³ Lam. iii. 48, 49.

his mouth, every precept or institution on which he has stamped his authority, every lineament of his image which can be traced on any of the meanest of his creatures, they respect ; and cannot bear to see any injury done to it, or even dishonour breathed upon it. How then can they be but grieved—is it any wonder that rivers of waters run down their eyes, when his name is profaned, his works contemned, his word denied, his precepts trampled on, his image disfigured and derided ?

2. It springs from love to the law of God. Consider, my brethren, where the text lies—in the heart, in the very bosom of the most fervent breathings of delight for that law which sinners “keep not.” It is bedded in a channel of pearls. What variety, what fulness of appropriate language, does the Psalmist employ in this sacred ode, to express his esteem for the revealed will of God, without any mixture of that vain repetition or straining, which is to be seen in formal and studied encomium ! The law of thy mouth—the word of thy lips—thy commandments—thy precepts—thy testimonies—thy statutes—thy judgments. They are true, faithful, righteous, wonderful, everlasting. God’s law had quickened him—made him wiser than all his teachers—comforted him in all his affliction—was his counsellor in critical cases. He cannot utter his love for it—he loved it exceedingly—he asks God to consider how he loved it—it was his delight—sweeter than honey to his mouth—better than thousands of gold and silver—it was his meditation all the day—he kept it, and made haste to keep it—he had sworn and he would perform it—he hid it in his heart—he rejoiced in it as those that find great spoil—he inclined his heart to it—he stuck to it—he opened his mouth and panted, his eyes failed, and he fainted in looking for it. And as if he had exhausted speech in its praise, he exclaims, hopeless of doing it or his own feelings justice, “I have seen an end of all perfection : but thy commandment is exceeding broad !”

What is the reason, brethren, that we do not feel that deep grief for sin which the Psalmist evinced ? It is because we have not the intense love which he felt for that law, of which every sin is a transgression. And why should we not ? Its limits surely have not been contracted—it has lost none of its excellences or recommendations. There is one consideration (not to mention others) which ought to increase our respect for the law, and consequently our grief for sin. Christians must reckon every sin as a violation of that law which the Son of God hath magnified, and made honourable, and vindicated by his obedience in our nature and in our stead. And God, by the agony and death of his Son, has stamped sin with the broad and burning brand of his hatred. O harder than the adamant must that heart be, which weeps not for that which brought the sweat as great drops of blood from the body of our Redeemer, and made his soul sorrowful even unto death !

3. It springs from love to the sinner. Love to God produces love to our brethren,—and this affection is expressly enjoined by the law

which is so much esteemed by every genuine saint. None knows better than he the sad and awful consequences of sin. Having escaped them himself, he is anxious to save others; and when all advices and remonstrances fail, and sinners will not hear nor consider to give glory to God, what can he do but, like the prophet, "weep in secret places for their pride" and impenitency? "One sinner destroyeth much good;" and when we see the law broken in any instance, we cannot calculate to how many sins this will lead in the same individual, or in others over whom he has influence, or to whom his example may extend. While the Christian hates the sin, he loves the person of the sinner; and the more he loves the latter, the more must he loathe and mourn over the former. This affords an illustration of the Psalmist's language: "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?"

4. There are personal feelings which stir this grief, and enter into its composition. When we see a person in distress, it frequently reminds us that we were once afflicted in the same or a similar way—a recollection which strengthens our sympathy, if it is not the spring from which it directly flows. In like manner the saint is made to recollect his former sins, and his grief for them mingles with that which he feels for the present sins of others. In how many ways, too, unperceived by us, may we not have contributed by our untenderness, or the careless performance of our duties, to lead astray or to harden others! Judah was forced to say, on fuller information, respecting his daughter-in-law whom he had condemned to be burned, "She hath been more righteous than I."¹ And how painful must have been the recollections of David on the misconduct of his sons! National guilt, which brings down temporal calamities on a people, is the aggregate to which each has contributed his share. Though the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, but every one shall be dealt with ultimately for his own transgressions; yet the sins which we see committed around us are the sins of our common nature, which, by the very laws of humanity, we are called to deplore. The words of the heathen poet may be adopted fitly on such occasions, and in this application, by the Christian, "I am a man; and I reckon nothing that belongs to mankind foreign to me." They are the fruits of the sin of our first father and representative, which is imputed justly to us all. They proceed from that depravity of nature which is common to all, and which might have discovered itself in us, by the same gross scandals and crimes which we observe in others, if this had not been prevented by converting grace, or providential restraints. It is told of a good man, who had a deep insight into the depravity of his heart, which had been cured by the regenerating grace of God, that he never saw a criminal going to the scaffold without saying, There goes such a one—pronouncing his own name.

¹ Gen. xxxviii. 26.

II. I now proceed to mention the leading qualities of this grief.

1. It is genuine. There may be, and often is, an affected and hypocritical expression of sorrow for prevailing sins, and there may be false and lying tears, as well as words, before God. Such were those which we may suppose the Jews to have shed, when, on visiting the tombs of the righteous which they had built from a pretended zeal, they exclaimed, "If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets."¹ And such are the wailings over public sins by those who indulge in practices, less gross it may be, but equally repugnant to the law of God. But the feeling described in our text was preceded, as we saw, by profound grief for personal sin, and is uniformly associated with a recollection of the sins which the mourner has himself committed.

Its genuineness is evinced by its impartiality. The sincere mourner is grieved for the sins of friends as well as of enemies,—of those of his own religious connection, as well as those of other denominations,—for the sins of his own family, as well as those of his neighbours; nay, he is more sensibly affected with the dishonours done to God by those who are most intimately connected with him—"the provoking of sons and daughters." He is grieved for all sin. The ears of every sober person are shocked at hearing the hellish imprecations uttered by some profane men; but he is affected by hearing the name of God taken, or minced, in vain. Few that have any respect to religion but would have their feelings hurt if they saw the theatres thrown open, and men flocking to places of public entertainment or business, on the Lord's day (although this is done in some countries called Christian); but he is distressed to know that this holy day is so generally spent in idleness, in private dissipation and parties of pleasure, in unnecessary visiting, or in vain, worldly, and irreligious company and conversation.

The genuineness of these tears is evinced by the ease with which they flow. Take a person of tender feelings to a scene of distress, and the tear will instantly start to his eye on beholding it. Tell a benevolent man of a worthy family involved at once in sickness and destitution, and you need not to give him a minute description of the distressing scene which harrowed up your feelings on visiting it, to dispose him to contribute for its relief. The mere sight of sin draws forth the sorrow of a godly man. "I BEHELD transgressors, and was grieved." It was an ancient custom to employ minstrels and hired mourners on occasions of domestic calamity, with the view of increasing the sorrow of those who assembled, and thus doing more honour to the dead. The saint has no need of such theatrical stimulants; "his eye affecteth his heart."²

In fine, his tears flow more freely in secret; he goes to his closet, and on his knees he weeps and makes supplication before his heavenly

¹ Mat. xxiii. 30.

² Lam. iii. 51.

Father. It was to God that the Psalmist was speaking in the text; and every true mourner can join with him in his appeal, "Do not I hate them, O Lord, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?"¹

2. This grief is generous and seemly. There is a godly sorrow for the evils of this life; but sorrow for worldly distresses is no proper mark of godliness. The observation applies so far to sorrow for sin. If we grieve and weep merely for our own sins, there may be ground to suspect that we are actuated by a selfish principle,—that we are merely afraid of the punishment to which they expose us: but when we are grieved for the sins of others, after our own have been pardoned and blotted out, this shows that we feel the dishonour done to God, and are touched with compassion for the souls of others.

It is accordingly a feeling of which no person needs to be ashamed. To be overwhelmed with affliction—to burst into tears at every untoward or distressing occurrence—to indulge in immoderate grief even on occasion of great trials, is weak and childish. But it is not unseemly to weep for sin—for any sin, and it is not easy to be excessive in this expression of sorrow. Such tears become Christian men—men of stature and valour; for, as one has expressed it, "it is the truest magnanimity to be sensible on the point of God's honour, which is injured by sin." David was reproved by his commander-in-chief for mourning immoderately and indecently for Absalom; but he had no reason to be ashamed when "rivers of waters ran down his eyes, because they kept not God's law." And had this degraded him in their eyes, he might have replied, as on another occasion, "I will be yet more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight."²

3. This grief varies, especially in its expression, in different persons, and in the same person at different times. This is common to it with other gracious dispositions in the hearts of men who are but partially sanctified, and whose exercise, in this their sublunary state, resembles the tide which ebbs and flows according to the varying influence of the moon.

Sometimes their eyes are dry, at other times the tears may be seen standing in them; now they trickle down the cheek, and again they run like a stream. Sometimes their hearts are altogether unaffected, and they have no tears to shed for sin, and, what is worse, no desire to shed them; at other times, they could wish that "their head were waters, and their eyes a fountain of tears," and that they had a lodge in the wilderness where they might weep day and night for the guilt of their people, and the judgments it has provoked. Sometimes the transition from insensibility to melting of heart may be very sudden, and effected by a very slight instrumentality. He who has the key of the well that is in the heart can open it by a touch—a word—a look. An instance of the species of sorrow exemplified in the text occurs in the Epistle

¹ Ps. cxxxix. 21.

² 2 Sam. vi. 22.

to the Philippians. The apostle had been exhorting his brethren to "rejoice in the Lord," and he had been giving them an example of it in his own exercise, in that most charming passage, beginning, "Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord." But while pursuing this pleasing strain, the Spirit brought to his remembrance some instances of professors, who had joined with him in speaking the same language, but had been left foully to contradict it; and he all at once changes his voice: "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ."¹ And it was some time before he recovered himself, so far as to intimate to them that he did not mean to retract what he had given them as his final exhortation: "Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I say, Rejoice."²

A difference may be expected in the exercise of the saints, at least as to degree, in the manifestation of sorrow for sin. Some are more eminent for one grace, and others for another; as Moses for meekness, and Job for patience; Elijah for zeal against sin, and Jeremiah for grief on account of it. The same affection, therefore, may often be discovered, according to the character of the individual, in the different forms of indignant reprehension, mild expostulation, or tearful complaint. The natural temperament is also to be considered. The constitution of some men denies them tears; and grace does not in this world change the bodily temperament. Deep waters make little noise, and are scarcely seen to roll or to move. Sometimes the sorrow is too big for utterance; and tears, when they come, bring relief. Even the situation of the person is to be taken into account. Abraham was called to walk with God in faith and obedience; while Lot, having chosen his residence in a city notorious for its wicked practices, had his righteous soul vexed from day to day.

4. This grief is habitual. Though it may vary, as the object of it is presented or withdrawn, or as the attention is called off to other and necessary duties, and "there is a time to weep, and a time to refrain from weeping"—yet it is not a transient emotion, but an abiding exercise. David in the text does not say Rivers *ran*, but *run*. Paul could call God to witness that he "had great sorrow and continual heaviness in his heart,"³ for his unbelieving and impenitent countrymen. As long as Christians are in this world, they will have reason for this feeling; although it may be more strongly excited on some occasions than on others. The idolatrous connections which were formed by Esau "were a grief of mind unto Isaac and Rebekah;"⁴ and at a later period of their lives, the latter gave expression to what must often have been the experience of the saints, when she said, "I am weary of my life because of the daughters of Heth."⁵ "Woe is me," cries the

¹ Phil. iii. 18.² Phil. iv. 4.³ Rom. ix. 2.⁴ Gen. xxvi. 35.⁵ Gen. xxvii. 46.

Psalmist, "that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar! My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace."¹ But offences must come, scandals will be occurring from time to time in the church; and unless the Christian go out of the world, he cannot avoid coming in contact with persons whose conduct will stir up his grief, and keep these "rivers of waters" from remaining stagnant.

In fine, this grief is influential and profitable. It may be useful to others; it will be useful to ourselves. "By the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better." It will increase our love to the law of God, on the principle which leads us to take an interest in the person whom we have sympathised with under distress or injurious treatment. It will enhance our compassion towards the sinner, by leading us to contemplate the misery to which he is exposed, to pray for him with greater fervency, and use every means for his relief. Sin is hateful, and the person who has rolled himself in it is odious in the sight of God and of all good men. But our indignation against sin is apt to become a passion (which it never is in God)—it is apt to be influenced, if not kindled, by the strange fire of our own corruptions, and to be directed against the person of the offender instead of his sin, to alienate us from him instead of exciting us to seek his salvation, and to dispose us to blaze abroad instead of "covering the multitude of his sins." Now our grief for sin will check our indignation against it, and its waters will reduce and cool down our feelings (if I may so express it) to the proper Christian temperature. In such cases, it is always dangerous when our anger is more intense than our grief. Jacob's sons, when they heard of the folly wrought in Israel by the dishonour of their sister, were grieved and very wroth: and this excess of indignation finally precipitated them into an act which not only brought on the name of Israel a deeper stain than that which they sought to wipe off, but extorted from him these bitter words on his death-bed: "Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel."² We never more need to "put away all wrath and bitterness and clamour and evil speaking," and to be "tender-hearted," than when we are reproving sinners, or using means to recover those who are led captive of the devil. Had Jonah been more grieved for the wickedness which led to his denunciation against the inhabitants of Nineveh, he would not have been angry at their repentance and relieve.

True grief for sin may also be expected to have a good effect on the sinners themselves. Surely if anything will awaken a person to a consideration of his ways, it would be the clear conviction that he was giving the most acute distress of mind to a godly minister, parent, brother, friend, or neighbour. If any advice or remonstrance can have effect, it would be that conveyed in the accents of tender sympathy and

¹ Ps. cxx. 5, 6.

² Gen. xlix. 7.

unaffected sorrow. This would oil, not feather, the arrow of reproof. If it was a Christian brother who was thus dealt with, surely he would be gained, and made to say, "Always smite me thus, for it is a kindness; reprove me thus, for it is an excellent oil, which shall not break mine head." If, provided we had a call and opportunity in Providence, we were to rise from our knees, and with hearts melted with grief for his sin, to go to him and say, "I am distressed for thee, my brother; my bowels are moved within me, my repentings are kindled. You see before you a fellow-offender, one who has sinned in the same manner as thou hast done, and whose sin has this day been brought to remembrance by thinking upon thine:"—If we were to act in this manner, have we not some ground to expect that, by the blessing of God, it might be the means of calling forth a kindred feeling in his breast, and might we not hope to see realised, in a much higher sense, the pathetic scene described by the poet, when an aged king went to beg the body of his son, and succeeded in touching and melting into pity the stout heart of the murderer, by reminding him that he also had a father?¹

But, above all, genuine grief for sin has an influence with God himself, and has often been the means of averting his displeasure, not only from the individual himself, but from those over whom he mourns. When God was about to inflict a signal punishment on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, he issued a special order to spare those who were engaged in this exercise. "Go through the midst of the city, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh, and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof."² Whole nations may have been indebted for their preservation from ruin, to the seasonable flowing of these "rivers of waters" from the eyes of a few genuine mourners in Zion, who, obscure and despised as they may have been, must be ranked, on this account, as the truest patriots, and the best benefactors of their country. "Ungodly men," says a pious writer,³ "though they meddle not with public affairs, or should they be faithful and honourable in meddling—yet by their impious lives they are traitors to the nation—the incendiaries of states and kingdoms. Godly men, though they can do no more than mourn for the sins of the nation, are the most loyal and serviceable subjects, bringing tears to quench the fire of wrath kindled by sin."

"Let these sayings sink down into your ears." Let us all be deeply humbled in the sight of God. Let "the land mourn, every family apart."⁴ "Let every man be covered with sackcloth, and cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?"⁵

¹ "Now each by turns indulged the gush of woe,
And now the mingled tides together flow."

² Ezek. ix. 4.

³ Archbishop Leighton.

⁴ Zech. xii. 12.

⁵ Jonah, iii. 8.

Let me close this subject with a few reflections.

1. How rare is this exercise, even among professing Christians ! To the greater part of the world it is wholly unknown. As the men of the world are strangers to the joy peculiar to a godly man, so they cannot enter into the grounds of his sadness. How can it be expected, when they never saw the criminality or turpitude of sin, which, to their vitiated taste, instead of being "an evil and bitter thing," is "a sweet morsel," which they "roll under their tongue?" With them, the mourner for sin is either a hypocrite or an enthusiast—he either acts a part by affecting a sorrow which he does not feel, or he foolishly mars his own happiness by brooding over the representations of a gloomy imagination, and indulging the qualms of a sickly and distempered conscience. Thus it has been in every age. Thus it was with David, or rather a greater than David, who had to say, "When I wept and chastened my soul with fasting, that was to my reproach. I made sackcloth also my garment ; and I became a proverb unto them. They that sit in the gate speak against me ; and I was the song of the drunkards."¹ This, though it stirs instead of abating their inward grief, induces them to restrain the expression of it in public, and to seek for secret places in which they may give it vent without provoking the reproaches and insolent contempt of them that are at ease in Zion. As in the context of the words I was quoting : "But as for me, my prayer is unto thee."

That those who never felt any love to God or his law should look strangely on the person who mourns and is in bitterness for it, is not to be wondered at. But there is a fact which comes nearer to us, and which may justly excite both surprise and alarm. How rare is the exercise of the Psalmist among those who profess godliness ! Among those who have separated from the world lying in wickedness, and who testify against and condemn the abominations done in the midst of the land ! How far short in this respect do those come whom we are bound in charity to look upon as Christians indeed ! O 'tis a rare thing to see a person weep for sin—but it is a rarer, much rarer thing, to see one weeping and grieved for the sins of others ! Where, oh where, are those adown whose cheeks the tears of sorrow for sin flow ? whose sore runs in the night, and whom neither bodily health, nor domestic enjoyments, no, nor the assurance of personal salvation, will comfort, while they see God's law broken, and his name every day blasphemed ? God knows where they are :—they are his hidden ones, like the seven thousand in Israel, who were unknown to Elijah, and like the mourners in Jerusalem, who could be discovered, not by Ezekiel, but by "the man clothed in linen, with the writer's ink-horn by his side."² We have often read the words of the text, they are familiar to our ears, we acquiesce in them as a just description of the exercise of a saint. But what experience have we of the exercise which they describe, or, allow-

¹ Ps. lxxix. 10—12.

² Ezek. ix. 2.

ing them to be figurative, of the inward sentiment of which they are the natural sign? It is said that God puts the tears of his children into "his bottle."¹ Ah! my brethren, if the tears which we have shed for worldly trials were separated and set aside, and if those which we have shed under awakenings and compunctious visitings for our own transgressions were also separated and set aside, what would the residue be? The smallest phial in the apothecary's shop would more than suffice to hold it. It will be so far a favourable symptom, if we are convinced of our mournful failure in this matter, and grieved for the hardness of our hearts.

2. How much need is there for the renewing and softening influences of the divine Spirit! The exercise described in the text supposes, in relation to sin, a discerning eye, a tender conscience, and a full heart. But the heart of man by nature is, in regard to spiritual things, blind, insensible, and unfeeling. Even those who possess great natural sensibility, and who have tears in readiness for every earthly object of distress, have none to bestow on that which is the fruitful and malignant source of all the evils which have drowned the world in sorrow. They may feel at the commission of those gross vices which attach infamy to themselves or their connections, or which entail visible misery on the culprit. But they feel not for sin—for the dishonour it does to God, and the degradation and ruin which it brings on the rational and immortal soul. The hard and flinty heart must be struck by the rod of God's word, wielded by the hand of a greater prophet than Moses, before the waters of godly sorrow will flow from it: and there is this difference between it and the rock in the neighbourhood of Horeb,—the one needed to be struck only once, whereas the other requires repeated strokes of divine influence, in order to extract the treasure which is infused into, not inherent in it. Even the renewed heart is apt to return to its original obduracy, or to contract a callousness as to sin by its daily contact with it, unless this is subdued by the grace of God. It is true, our Saviour hath said, "He that believeth on me—out of his belly" (that is, out of his heart) "shall flow rivers of living water." But what says the Evangelist in explanation? "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive."² Would we have the services of this day, would you have the word now spoken, to profit us, by leading us to mourn and be in bitterness for our sins, like David in the text, then let us look up, with faith and fervent desire, to Him who promised to "pour on the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications."

¹ Ps. lvi. 8.² John, vii. 39.

SERMON XX.¹

THE BETTER COUNTRY.

"But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly."—HEB. xi. 16.

It is not at all uncommon to meet with persons who desire a better country than that in which they were born and have long resided. Thousands have, within these few years, left our own shores, and traversed wide oceans to the west and the south, in quest of new abodes. In some cases this has proceeded from the urgency of external circumstances, inducing them to seek support for their families in places less peopled, and where the means of subsistence are more easily procured. The stern law of necessity has obliged them to tear asunder the ties of country and kindred. More frequently, the emigrants have been actuated by a restless disposition, the love of novelty, a spirit of discontent with the institutions of their native land, or extravagant and visionary hopes of bettering their condition. But all, how different soever their motives, merely seek to exchange one spot of earth for another, and in this respect differ widely, or, as we usually say, *toto cœlo*, from the persons described in our text, who "desire a better country, that is, an heavenly."

The inspired apostle is speaking immediately of the patriarchs. As an example of the power of faith, he adduces the conduct of Abraham, who left his native country, and went out, at the command of God, "not knowing whither he went," and his subsequent manner of life in continuing to "dwell in tabernacles, as did Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise." By adhering, during the whole of their lives, to this mode of residence, the apostle tells us that these patriarchs "confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth." Such was the express confession of Abraham to the inhabitants of Canaan, "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you;" and of Jacob to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been." From these premises the general conclusion is obvious: "They that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." But the question might be put, What country did they seek?—and this the apostle proceeds to answer. If there was any country upon earth which

¹ Delivered January 1835.

these sojourners longed for, it must have been their native land, in which they had kinsmen and connections; and its distance and the difficulties of the journey were not so great as to prevent their reaching it, provided they had cherished such a desire. "Truly if they had been mindful of that country from which they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned." But as they never testified any wish of this kind, the inference in the text natively follows: "But now" (from what has been said of their conduct, it appears plainly that) "they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly."

What is said of these holy men is true of all believers both under the Old and New Testament. "I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner as all my fathers were," said David, long after the children of Israel had entered on the quiet possession of Canaan. The apostle Peter addresses the saints to whom he wrote, "as strangers and pilgrims;" and lest any should suppose that this description was applicable only to the strangers scattered abroad through the lesser Asia, we need only refer to another apostle, who declares, in the name of Christians in general, "Our conversation is in heaven," and exhorts them to "set their affection on things above, and not on things on the earth." If we are "fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God," we are pilgrims on earth, and our heart, as well as our home, is in heaven. This is the doctrine of the text; and in handling it we shall consider,

I. The desire which believers cherish with respect to the better country.

II. The manner in which this desire is evinced and manifested by them.

I. The desire of the better country.

We possess little direct knowledge of heaven or a future state of blessedness. Scripture holds it forth chiefly by images, borrowed from earthly things, and describes its glory and felicity by representing them as far surpassing everything of the kind seen or enjoyed in this world. Is it represented as an inheritance?—it is "incorruptible and undefiled." A crown?—it "fadeth not away." A kingdom?—it "cannot be removed." Is it held forth as a city?—it is "the New Jerusalem, whose walls are garnished with all manner of precious stones." Is it spoken of as a country?—then it is "a better country,"—better than Canaan, which, while the blessing of God rested on it, was a goodly land, the joy of all the earth—better than any country that ever existed, or could exist, in this world. There are various qualities which render one country preferable to another, such as healthfulness, abundance, tranquillity, knowledge, and righteousness, liberty and order, and security for the permanent enjoyment of our property. And in respect of all these qualities it might be easily shown that heaven is a better country than any upon earth. But, without dwelling upon this, let us endea-

your to describe the desire which the Christian cherishes with respect to heaven.

1. The desire is of supernatural implantation. All the desires of the natural heart are confined to this world, and to what may be enjoyed on earth. "What shall we eat? what shall we drink? wherewithal shall we be clothed?" are the expressions of natural desire. Or if, in some, the aspirations may be of a more refined and elevated description, still they are sublunary. They may be aerial, and even ethereal, but they are not celestial. The pride of life, as well as the lust of the eye and of the flesh, is of this world. We have heard of an ambitious man who wept because there was not another world for him to conquer; but they were all earthly laurels he wished to win;—he had no desire to "take the kingdom of heaven by force." There is in man a natural longing for immortality, but his wish is to enjoy it on earth; or if he has feigned to himself a heaven as a future residence, it is constructed after the likeness of this world.

The saints themselves did not always breathe this desire. We might apply the words of the text in this view. "*Now* they desire a better country." Formerly their desires were like other men's. Abraham, at one time, looked not beyond the inheritance of his father Nahor, and what he might be able to add to it by his own skill and industry; but when, at the divine call, he left Ur of the Chaldees, "God gave him another heart,"¹ and thenceforth he became unmindful of the country from which he had come out, and was content to be a sojourner in that to which he had gone, for he desired a heavenly country. So is it with all those who are effectually called. Formerly they "walked according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind." But now they are born again, and have new dispositions;—born from above, and seek those things that are above. Their desire for heaven is an essential element of their new nature. It is a supernatural instinct, pointing to heaven as their mother-country—a sublime aspiration, indicative of their noble birth, and distinguishing them as men of "a more excellent spirit" than those who are content to grovel in the dust of this world.

2. This desire proceeds from a discovery of the glory and excellence of heaven. It is not a blind instinct, like that which teaches the swallow to migrate at a certain season of the year, or the new-born child to seek the milk which nature intended for its sustenance; but an enlightened and reasonable feeling. The saints desire heaven because they perceive and judge it to be a better country than any on earth. Some perhaps may ask, How can they know heaven to be such a desirable land, when they never saw it? We might reply by asking, Does all our knowledge come by sight? Have we not ears as well as eyes? Does not our acquaintance with the greater part of the earth which we inhabit, rest on the report of travellers or the letters of

¹ 1 Sam. x. 9.

friends? But the saints have seen heaven through the glass of the divine promise, which brings it within their view. This is the account which the apostle gives of the exercise of the patriarchs in the context: "These all died in faith, not having received the promises" (that is, the blessings promised), "but having seen them afar off." That wonderful instrument the telescope, the invention of which Providence would appear to have delayed, as it were, to put to shame the infidelity of modern times, not only brings near to us the heavenly bodies, discernible by the naked eye, in a way which could not have previously been conceived, but reveals a multitude of stars, which, without its aid, would have been to us as if they had not existed, and have remained invisible as the glories of the third heavens. And who will venture to deny that God can communicate similar discoveries in the spiritual world, as far above the reach of the eye of reason, as those of the telescope are above the range of the natural eye, but accompanied with impressions of equal distinctness and certainty? Deny it who may, Christians are assured of its truth. "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."¹ Their "eyes have seen the king in his beauty; they have beheld the land that is very far off."² "As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit."³

The desire of the Christian for the heavenly country is enlarged with his increasing discoveries of its riches and glory, and these discoveries are not only theoretic, but also experimental. "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God, And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope."⁴ "The kingdom of God is within you." You have heard of "coming events casting their shadows before;" but "the world to come" casts its lights before—it makes its "powers" to be felt. The saint sometimes obtains, as Moses before his death, a Pisgah-sight of the better country, and he tastes in the wilderness the grapes of the heavenly Eshcol. And when admitted to communion with God in ordinances, he is led to exclaim with Jacob, "This is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."

3. This desire proceeds from, and is supported by, a firm and appropriating faith of the divine promises. The patriarchs not only "saw them afar off," but they "were persuaded of them and embraced them." They relied on the truth of the promiser, and they embraced the promised good, as all their salvation, and all their desire.

Those who stigmatise this as the dream of fancy, should consider to what their rejection of it leads. Will we exclude God from his own world? Will we prevent him from holding intercourse with the spirits which he has made? And what less do we, when we say that he

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 6.² Isa. xxiii. 17.³ 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10.⁴ Rom. v. 2, 3, 4.

cannot speak to them, so as to satisfy them that it is his voice, and to demand their reliance on his word?—a demand which one creature daily makes upon another, and does not make in vain. “If we receive the witness of men,” surely “the witness of God is greater.” “Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Shall we brand all the great and holy men of antiquity, the lights of their age, when darkness was all around, the salt of the earth in a time of almost universal corruption—as enthusiasts? The history of their faith is the record of the evidence for a future state of blessedness. Abraham was assured of the call of God, when he left his native country, and went out, not knowing whither he went; and he not only attested the sincerity of his belief, but confessed the truth of the promise made to him, by continuing to dwell as a sojourner in Canaan to the end of his days. And so did Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. The promise of God continued to receive fresh accessions of evidence in the subsequent revelations made to the fathers, and in the partial accomplishment of it, till at last it was completed in the appearance, ministry, and work of him in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed; and it has been “confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.”¹

The faith of the Christian does not rest solely on the external evidence of miracles, as a divine attestation. The Gospel has a self-evidencing power;—like the sun, it carries its own light along with it, whithersoever it goes. It is a luminous body, and every ray which proceeds from it throws light on the path to heaven. God does not require his people to rest their hopes of eternal felicity on a simple promise, that he will bestow it upon them. He knows the infirmity of our flesh, as creatures of sense, and the infirmity of our spirit, as sinners oppressed with a feeling of guilt and unworthiness. He speaks to us by facts, and facts which, addressing themselves to our wants and the appetencies of our nature, are calculated to lift our desires and expectations to the inconceivable good which he hath prepared in heaven. How wonderful the apparatus for this purpose! How simple, yet every way adapted to the end! When Jacob had left his father’s house, he saw in a dream “a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.” This was intended to confirm his faith in the invisible protection of God; but it had also a typical meaning, to which our Lord referred when he said, “Ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.”² Heaven was twice opened,—first at the descent of the Son of God to our world, and, secondly, at his ascension. When the Son of God descended, the portals of heaven closed behind him, and were as firmly barred as they had ever been; but they

¹ Heb. ii. 4.

² John, i. 51.

were not closed after he ascended, when he had obtained eternal redemption for us. Heaven is now kept open by his residence and ministration in the upper sanctuary. The incarnation of the Son of God, his ministry on earth, his death, his resurrection, ascension, session, and intercession, are the steps of the mystic ladder by which the faith and desires of the saints rise to heaven. "Ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you." "God who is rich in mercy hath quickened us together with Christ, and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

4. This desire is animated by a hope, which produces patience. "We are saved by hope." Such is the importance of this Christian grace, and the connection in which it stands with the future possession of glory, that it gives a name to heavenly enjoyments in the Scripture. Hence we read of "the hope laid up for us in heaven," and of looking for "that blessed hope," and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Desire would fail were it not invigorated by hope, and sustained by patience. It is in itself an impatient feeling, and sickens at delay. Its language is, "Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?" Gracious desire, is the soul looking out at the window of hope, and leaning on the arm of patience, "counting him faithful that has promised, and against hope believing in hope." "The vision is yet for an appointed time; but at the end it shall speak and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come."¹

5. The desire is habitual. "They *desire* a better country." This was their exercise, not at any one time only, but through the whole of their lives. Christian desire is the breathing of the new creature after its native clime, its inheritance, its rest. It is not so much an emotion, a transient feeling, called up during a period of excitement, as a principle fixed and rooted in the heart, and which is entwined with all the feelings of the new man. It may be weakened and borne down by corruption, the cares, riches, and pleasures of this life, but cannot be extinguished. It may be shaken by the storm of temptation in the soul, but faithful as the magnetic needle to the north, it will resume its position, and point with trembling reverence towards heaven. Sometimes when faith is steadfast, and hope lively, the Christian's steps are enlarged under him, and the pulse beats high with the desire of celestial glory. "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come, and appear before God?" "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life." But even when this is not their attainment, believers can say,

¹ Hab. ii. 2.

"Yea, in the way of thy judgments, O Lord, have we waited for thee; the desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remembrance of thee. With my soul have I desired thee in the night. Yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early."

Lastly, it is a desire which shall be gratified. "The desire of the righteous shall be granted; the expectation of the poor shall not perish." There are many things which men desire most ardently, health, long life, riches, friends, but they never obtain them, or they do not find that satisfaction in them which they promised themselves. All the desires of good men are not always granted, even though they are not in themselves unlawful. Moses desired permission to enter Canaan, David to build the temple, and Peter to know what should become of the beloved disciple; yet their desires were denied. But the gracious desire of heaven shall in no case be frustrated. God will not disappoint those desires which are of his own implantation, and rest upon his own faithful word and promise. They are sacred to him as the first-fruits laid upon his altar, and perfumed with prayers and praise. What is more, the object of their desire shall not only be granted, but their expectations shall be exceeded, when their hope has been turned into fruition, and their desire into delight. Each shall be constrained to say, as the Queen of Sheba of the glory of Solomon, "Behold, the half was not told me."

II. It remains to show how the saints evince and manifest this desire. Desire is an affection of the mind of which the individual is conscious, but which others can know only by its outward manifestations. It is evidently implied in the text that the patriarchs had evinced by decided proofs that their desires were supremely fixed on heaven. They gave credible evidence of this. We are bound to act in such a manner as may convince others, both within and without the church, that we are journeying to the heavenly country, and induce them to cast in their lot with us, and bear us company by the way; as Moses said to his brother-in-law, "We are journeying to the place of which the Lord said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good."¹ But it is incumbent on us also to satisfy our own consciences on this head—to ascertain, on solid and scriptural grounds, that our desire is of a gracious and saving kind. Let us keep both of these in view, while we inquire how the saints show that they desire heaven as a better country.

1. The saints evince this desire by their conversation. If a person has the intention or prospect of going to a foreign country, he will often speak of it, seek information about it, and make himself master of its language. The saints "speak the language of Canaan." "Our conversation is in heaven," says the apostle. He includes under that expression the whole of a Christian's conduct and deportment. But his saying is true also in the proper and more restricted sense of that word.

¹ Numb. x. 19.

It is natural for us to talk of those things which are the object of our esteem, desire, and pursuit. "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." They that are of the world, speak of the world; they that are of God, speak of the things of God. If persons conceal their desires, it is either because the discovery of these may balk their expectation, because they are ashamed of them, or because they think that others will not sympathise with them. But none of these reasons need or ought to prevent us from communicating our heavenly desires. The expression of them cannot interfere with their accomplishment; and to be ashamed of expressing them is a feeling altogether unworthy of an expectant of immortality. He who in a foreign land is ashamed of his native country, is unworthy of it; and he who is ashamed of the kingdom of God cannot expect admission into it. With respect to the want of congenial feelings in those with whom he converses, the Christian will study prudence in the introduction of religious topics, and avoid to make his good evil spoken of; but even while he keeps in his mouth with the bridle of discretion in the presence of the ungodly, he will carefully shun everything which can be construed into a disavowal of his hopes; and if, at any time, he should be tempted to this sin, his speech will bewray him. The Christian pilgrim is under no such restraint, when he is in the company of his fellow-travellers, and with them his talk will be of the better country. You must not, however, confine a heavenly conversation to discourse which turns directly on heaven. He that speaks of God, speaks of heaven, "for it is God's throne;" he that speaks of the church, speaks of heaven, "for it is the city of the great King." To talk of holiness, is to talk of the atmosphere of heaven; to converse about Christ, is to converse about the way to heaven, and that which constitutes all its felicity.

Religious converse has been practised by the saints in all ages, and especially in times of abounding irreligion and profaneness. "Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another: and the Lord hearkened, and heard it; and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name."¹ They not only spake of divine things when they happened to meet, but they met that they might speak of them. They had stated as well as occasional meetings for this purpose. Two things go far to prove that professors of religion have become, in a great degree, strangers to heavenly desires: first, the rareness of religious conversation in their occasional discourse; and, secondly, the falling off of meetings for prayer and religious converse. Our fathers grudged not to abridge their hours of labour and their hours of rest—they scrupled not to travel with the light of the moon and the stars, and to spend hours in a smoky hovel, that they might enjoy this foretaste of heaven upon earth; while we, with every accommodation and facility, will not go out of our houses, or cross a street, to enjoy the privilege. My brethren, these things ought

¹ Mal. iii. 16.

not to be so. To what can we ascribe them but to earthliness of affection, distrust of God, and want of brotherly love ?

2. The saints evince this temper of mind, by their conduct in reference to this present world. They testify by their whole deportment that they do not regard it as their portion and rest. In proportion as their desires are set on heaven, they are withdrawn from this earth. So far as they act in character, they display a holy indifference about terrestrial objects. When their faith in the better country is clear, and their longings after it lively and ardent, they make their "moderation known to all men," being assured that "the Lord is at hand." Do they seek great things for themselves in respect of wealth or honours ? They seek them not. Their treasure is in heaven, where their hearts are ; and they run the race set before them, and fight the good fight, in hope of that unfading crown which Christ shall bestow on them at his second appearing.

Are they placed in affluent circumstances ? They are not high-minded ; they trust not in uncertain riches, they are jealous over themselves, lest their hearts should be corrupted by them ; and are "ready to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." Are they in depressed and indigent circumstances ? They are content with such things as they have, and submit cheerfully to privations. Are they subjected to worldly losses and bereavements ? They do not bewail their lot, like him who cried, "Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and what have I more ?"¹ but with holy Job, they say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord taketh away ;" and, provided such dispensations have, through the blessing of God, the effect of weaning their minds from the world, and fixing them more steadily on heaven, they count their losses gains. They are ready to part with all at the call of God, or for the sake of Christ ; like Moses, who "esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward ;" and like the believing Hebrews, who "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance." With their hopes and desires of heaven within them, they can say, with better reason than the philosopher in the midst of the bustle and anxiety of a conflagration,—*"I carry my all with me."*

3. They evince this desire by their patience under the afflictions of this life. "No chastening is for the present joyous, but grievous ;" and if the saint had hope in this life only, he would be of all men the most miserable, as he is often chastened and plagued more sharply than others. Worldly men cannot fail to fret and murmur and be miserable under affliction. It crushes their hopes, withers their desires, and dries up the springs of their comforts. But it cannot reach those of

¹ Judges, xviii. 24.

the man whose "affections are set on things which are above." On the contrary, by mortifying the remains of carnality, and disengaging his heart from the world, it contributes to strengthen his gracious desires, and makes him long more ardently for that place, where alone he can enjoy complete exemption from all that is painful and distressing. At the same time his desire, being full of hope, sustains the soul, and enables him to wait patiently for the salvation of God. This influence of desire and hope in sustaining the Christian is largely expressed in the prayer which the apostle poured out in behalf of the believing Colossians: "That ye might walk worthy of the Lord, strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness; giving thanks unto the Father, who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Add to this that sanctified affliction is the means of preparing for heaven, and when Christians perceive this, they are made to "glory in tribulations," these appearing to them light and momentary, compared with the exceeding great and eternal weight of glory which they work for them. Fretfulness and impatience under trouble argue that the desire of heaven in the Christian is languid, or obstructed by much unbelief and ignorance of the way in which God conducts his people to the city of habitation. "Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord." "Ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry."

4. Believers evince their desire of heaven by the regular intercourse which they keep up with it, and the delight they take in those exercises which most resemble the employment of its blessed inhabitants.

There is nothing which the stranger and sojourner is more attentive to, or more gratified by, than maintaining correspondence with his native country. If he should show himself indifferent about receiving intelligence from home, or neglect opportunities of communication, it would be considered as a proof that he had become an alien, and ceased to wish for a return. The word and ordinances of God are the appointed means of intercourse between the saints and the better country. To the former they owe all their knowledge of it, and they cannot fail to take delight in that which was the first means of producing their hope and desire of heaven. They "call the Sabbath a delight," for it is the day which, in its peaceful and sacred employments, harmonises most with "the rest which remaineth to the people of God." By prayer and meditation they send their desires heavenward; and by faith they receive a return in assurances of acceptance, and communications of grace. Nor is this an intercourse by mere symbols; it is real

and sensible ; and there is a personal agency established for carrying it on, by the residence of Christ in heaven, and the residence of the Spirit in their hearts.

Praise is the characteristic employment of the upper sanctuary, and all true Christians delight in this part of worship. In their prayers they praise God, ascribing to him the kingdom, power, and glory ; nor do they neglect, or carelessly perform, in private or public, the ordinance of psalmody, "speaking to one another, in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, making melody in their heart unto the Lord."

5. They manifest this desire by regulating their conduct according to the laws, maxims, and manners of heaven. A stranger may accommodate himself to the manners and habits of the people among whom he dwells, provided there is nothing in them that is immoral ; and a Christian will not court singularity in things common or indifferent—such as in his gait, dress, or dialect. But in all things which are regulated by the law of God he will be precise and uncompromising. Whenever the maxims or manners of the world contradict the law of the God of heaven, he will make conscience of practising nonconformity ; and he will find many opportunities for this. "Be not conformed to this world." "Dearly beloved, I beseech you, as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul." Regulating himself by the maxims, and conforming himself to the manners of heaven, the conduct of the heir of heaven will be holy ; for "every man that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, even as Christ is pure." "Seeing that ye look for such things, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness." He will manifest in his deportment towards his brethren a pacific and forgiving disposition. And the whole of his character will bear the impress of that love which is the predominating feature of the inhabitants of the better country.

6. The saints evince their desires after heaven by their diligent preparation for it. Desire is a spur to diligence, both in natural and spiritual things. They say plainly that they "seek a country"—not as if it were unknown to them, or hard to find, but in respect of diligence in the use of means of coming to it. Their exertions are as great, and their vigilance as unremitting, as if they expected to obtain heaven as the proper reward of their services. "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth to those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Desires will never bring a man to heaven any more than they will bring a traveller to the end of his journey.

Finally, the saints evince their desire for heaven by their willingness to die. You have heard of the Swiss sickness—a longing for their native hills which comes upon that people, when they are abroad,

which makes them sick at heart, and grows into an incurable disease. Something similar is occasionally felt by the saints, whether it be excited by the evils of this life, or by ecstatic discoveries of heavenly bliss. "I loathe it," said Job; "I would not live alway." "Now," said Simeon, "lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." We must all die; but it is the saint only that, on cool reflection, is ready, and willing, and sometimes desirous to die. And though the Christian may not always attain to this, yet he is willing to leave this world when God calls him out of it—"willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." We find Paul at one time "in a strait between two, having a desire to depart;" and yet adding, "nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you."¹ But when he saw that his work was over, he yielded to his ruling passion, which was, "to be with Christ." "I am NOW READY to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand."²

From this subject we may learn, in the first place, the reasonableness of the preference which the saints give to heaven. It is a better country than any that they know, or expect to see on earth. Their preference is not the effect of gloomy discontentment, or of a mind soured with disappointments, and dissatisfied with their connections, natural, civil, or religious. It is the result of a fair and deliberate calculation, founded on the discoveries they have made of the superior advantages of the heavenly country, and confirmed by experience. "By faith, Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than all the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect to the recompense of the reward."

2. See one improvement which we should make of the evils of this life—to excite and strengthen our desire for the better country. It is not enough to feel these evils, to grieve for them, to complain of them, to become weary of life and to wish to die. They have failed in producing their proper effects, if they have not enhanced heaven in our estimation, and induced us to long for our departure from this world chiefly that we may "be with Christ, which is far better."

3. Let us learn what ought to be our wishes and prayers for our country on earth: that it may be as like as possible to the heavenly country. Their love to and their desire after heaven does not quench patriotism in the breasts of enlightened Christians. For their brethren and companions' sakes, they will pray that peace may be within its walls and prosperity within its palaces. They know that God has a cause on earth, and they are anxious that it should flourish in their father-land. Their native country is always in their eye when they pray, "Thy kingdom come: thy will be done in earth, even as it is in

¹ Phil. i. 23.

² 2 Tim. iv. 6.

heaven." They are not afraid that it shall become too like heaven ; the more it flourishes in knowledge, virtue, and religion, the brighter will be the reflection from it of the image of that happy place, where all is light and love, and in which they desire to meet their children, and their children's children.

4. The subject teaches us the necessity of faith—to discover the existence and the excellence of the heavenly country, and to enable us to live under the influence of unseen but eternal realities. Would you form an acquaintance with this better country ? Seek that faith which is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Without this, you want the eye to discern, the ear to hear, and the heart to conceive, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. "We," says the apostle, "look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Finally, my brethren, do we desire a better country ? Then, we will regret the less that every year which is spent shortens the time of our remaining here, and brings us nearer to eternity. We will see the wisdom of those trials which, by loosing the ties that bind us to this world, prepare our minds for the next ; and in every instance of mortality we will hear the admonition, "Arise ye, and depart ; for this is not your rest, because it is polluted."¹

¹ Micah, ii. 10.

SERMON XXI.¹

THE FAN IN CHRIST'S HAND.

"Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."—
MATTHEW, iii. 12.

WE are accustomed to hear children speak of the Bible and the Testament; and we sometimes find this mode of speaking retained by persons who ought to have put away childish things. The Old and New Testaments form one Bible. They proceed from the same author, testify the same things, possess the same properties, and lead to the same end. In the writings of the Old Testament we have eternal life, and they testify of Christ. And the writings of the New Testament abound with quotations from those of Moses and the prophets. Upwards of four hundred years elapsed between the composing of the last book of the Old Testament and the first of the New, and yet the current of revelation flows on in an unbroken stream. You would suppose that Matthew had taken the pen from the hand of Malachi, and proceeded immediately to relate the accomplishment of what his predecessor had predicted. "Behold," says Malachi, "I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me." This Matthew relates as accomplished in John the Baptist. "This is he that was spoken of by the prophet saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight." "The Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple," says Malachi. This Matthew shows to have been fulfilled in the coming of Christ; and even in their accounts of the manner of his appearance, they harmonise. "But who may abide the day of his coming?" exclaims the prophet; "and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap."² "He shall baptise," responds the evangelist, "with the Holy Ghost and with fire." "Behold the day cometh," continues the former, "that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall

¹ This was the last discourse delivered by the author, having been preached August 2, 1835, the Sabbath immediately preceding his decease.

² Mal. iii. 2.

leave them neither root nor branch.”¹ This corresponds exactly with the words before us : “Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner ; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

A secure people need a severe minister ; and it is a good sign that a people have been aroused from their security when they are reconciled to the severity of the preacher. Such a preacher was John the Baptist, who warned a hypocritical nation to flee from the wrath to come, preaching the baptism of repentance. His ministry occupied a middle place, as it were, between the law and the gospel. He stood between the prophets and Christ. He was honoured above the former, because he was permitted to point out the Messiah with the finger, and to say, “Behold the Lamb of God.” It was his work to testify of Christ as just about to appear, and to conduct and deliver over his disciples to his and their common Master. In speaking of him, though he cheerfully admits his own inferiority, he at the same time asserts the harmony of their design, and warns his hearers against expecting to find under the administration of Him that was to come any covert for their hypocrisy and other vices. “Now also,” says he in a preceding verse, “the axe is laid unto the root of the tree : therefore every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, is hewn down, and cast into the fire.” What more calculated to awaken unprofitable members of the church than this description ? The unfruitful tree is marked out by the gardener, who has long dressed and pruned it in vain ; the ground is cleared around it, the axe is laid at its root, and nothing remains but for the lord of the garden, when he comes in to survey it, to give the command, “Cut it down : why cumbereth it the ground ?” Similar is the description in the succeeding verse. Water will remove the external filth which cleaves to any object, but the operation of fire is severer and more effectual—it melts the hardest metals and burns up the dross. John baptised with water ; but Christ shall “baptise with the Holy Ghost and with fire.”

The description is varied in our text, while the subject is still the same. The work of purifying the church, and clearing it of all that is foreign, incongruous or offensive, is likened to the operation of winnowing grain. This process, in ancient times, consisted of different operations. The corn, after being thrashed, was laid out on a floor, and exposed to a gentle wind which scattered the straw and chaff. It was then beaten by the hoofs of oxen, next passed through a sieve, and lastly subjected to the hand-fan, a species of shovel, by which it was thoroughly cleansed. Similar to this is the purification of the church ; and Christ, who superintends the whole process, and reserves for himself the last and crowning part of it, is here compared to the husbandman, who stood with the fan in his hand, with which he, for the last time, turned up the grain, that the wind might separate and bear away every remaining particle of chaff and refuse, and that nothing might rest

¹ Mal. iv. 1.

behind but what was pure and substantial. It is one part of the work of Christ to purify his church ; and he will not do this work superficially, or leave it unfinished : he will "thoroughly purge his floor ;" he will make a complete separation, at last, between the chaff and the wheat ; the latter he will deposit in his heavenly garner, and the former he will burn up with unquenchable fire. The devil has a fan of his own, which he uses for the purposes of temptation. "Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat." But Christ will not give up his fan to Satan : he still holds it in his hand, and brings individual believers, as well as his church, under its operation, that he may thoroughly cleanse his floor.

My intention, at present, is to name some of those means which the Lord Jesus Christ employs to fan or purify his church.

It may be premised that the work is twofold. First, it includes a separation of persons. The church in this world is like a barn-floor, which contains a mixture of good grain and refuse. There are hypocrites and nominal or godless professors, as well as genuine saints ; and sometimes the number of the former may become so great that it is difficult to perceive any other. Hence the need of times of reformation, in which Christ comes into his church as a purifier, with his fan in his hand. Secondly, it implies a separation of persons from their corruptions. The husks of sin, the clay of corruption, the chaff of vanity, cleave to the best so long as they are in the body, and hence they need to be sifted and beaten and fanned, in order to cleanse them. In accomplishing these separate objects, our Lord proceeds in a manner somewhat different ; but still, in general, the same means serve, in his adorable wisdom, to effect both purposes.

1. Christ accomplishes this work by means of his Word. It is compared to fire, on account of its searching and purifying tendency ; to a candle or light, which discovers the hidden things of darkness ; to a sharp two-edged sword, which cuts both ways, discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart, and divides between the soul and spirit,—making a discrimination between states and characters, not only by laying down infallible marks of these, but also by applying them convincingly to individuals.

The Scriptures evince their discriminating power, by touching both the consciences and the corruptions of men ; and by either softening and subduing them, or by irritating and hardening them. To some the gospel proves the savour of life ; to others, the savour of death : to them that are saved, it is the power of God ; to them that perish, a stumbling-block and foolishness. "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be spoken against,—that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."¹ So it was foretold by Simeon to the mother of our Lord ; and the history of his personal ministry is a commentary on that text.

¹ Luke, ii. 34.

When he preached first in his native city of Nazareth, we are told that, after he had read out his text, "the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him." This was a favourable commencement. After he had proceeded so far in his sermon, it is said, "All bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth." This was still more flattering. When it is added, "They said, Is not this Joseph's son?"—the question is suspicious; but still it might only mean that they were the more struck with astonishment at his wisdom when they recollected that he was the son of one of their poor townsmen. But Jesus proceeded to address them in a style that was more plain than pleasant, telling them that a prophet was seldom accepted in his own country, and reminding them that though there were many widows in Israel during the famine in the days of Elias, that prophet was sent to relieve only a single widow who lived in Sarepta, a city of Sidon; and though there were many lepers in Israel, the only one whom Elisha cured was Naaman, a Syrian,—this doctrine of the divine sovereignty instantly changed their admiration into resentment. "All they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong."¹

His subsequent history presents numerous examples of the same nature. After having miraculously fed the multitude on one occasion, they exclaimed, "This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world;" and they would have taken him by force to make him a king. When he withdrew from them, they eagerly followed and sought him out. But by means of the fan of his word, he soon freed himself of these light-minded, carnal followers. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat? This is an hard saying: who can hear it? From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him."² On one occasion we are informed, "the common people heard him gladly:"³ but why? Because his discourse had on that occasion been directed against the Scribes and Pharisees, and they were pleased to see their superiors mortified; but when their own turn came, and he began to reprove their vices, by-and-by they were offended also. On another occasion, he dispersed a whole congregation, except one, by that single saying, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." "And they which heard it, being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even to the last; and Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst."⁴

Similar instances might be mentioned of the power of Christ's word in distinguishing the characters of particular individuals. What a contrast between the effects which it produced on the Syrophenician woman, and the rich young man! The former persevered in her suit, even after being repelled, and classed with the dogs: "Truth, Lord; yet the

¹ Luke, iv. 28—29.² John, vi. 14—66.³ Mark, xii. 37.⁴ John, viii. 7, 9.

dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master's table." The latter is blown away with a single word: "He went away sorrowful; for he had great possessions."¹ "What thou doest, do quickly," said our Lord to Judas; and, stirred by this fan, Satan carried away the unsound disciple to the conclave of the enemies of Jesus: When the word of God crosses our inclinations, discovers our idols, demands the sacrifice of our corruptions—it raises a storm within, and arms the whole soul against it. "I hate him," said Ahab of Micaiah, "because he always prophesies evil of me." And what else could a faithful prophet say of a wicked man, even though that man was a king?

2. Christ cleanses his house by means of the fan of church discipline. There are persons on whom the word has no effect, either one way or another: it neither converts nor convinces them—neither reclaims them from their sins, nor drives them from the society of the faithful. They are like the ancient Jews, who did steal, murder, commit adultery, and yet came and stood before the Lord in his house, saying, "We are delivered to do all these abominations."² Are these persons to be admitted to the privileges of the kingdom of heaven; or, having been admitted to them before their conduct became openly immoral and profane, must they be permitted to enjoy them without any control? No: Christ has not left his spiritual kingdom so defenceless, nor obliged his servants to give that which is holy unto the dogs. He has committed to them "the keys of the kingdom of heaven," and among these is the key of discipline, and the power of binding and loosing by censures; and when these are exercised agreeably to the rule of his word, he approves of and ratifies them in heaven. The purity of the church's communion is to be maintained by excluding the unworthy from its pale, by admonishing and rebuking the scandalous, by suspending from sealing ordinances the irregular and disorderly, and by excommunicating the obstinate and impenitent. Our Lord's parables of the wheat and tares, and of the net in which were enclosed good and bad fishes, teach us that we are not to expect that the church on earth will ever consist of godly persons exclusively, and that the office-bearers of the church are not to presume to judge of the states of men. But the words of Christ are not to be interpreted so as to contradict themselves; and does he not say of the person who neglects to hear the church, "Let him be unto you as an heathen man and a publican?" and has not his Spirit said by the apostle, "Put away from among yourselves that wicked person?"³ Such censures have a twofold good effect: they remove contagion from the church; and they often have the effect of removing corruption from the offending individual. They are "delivered unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."⁴

3. Christ purifies his church and people by the fan of affliction. I scruple not, my brethren, to call afflictions an ordinance of God; they

¹ Mat. xv. 27.; xix. 22.

² Jer. vii. 9.

³ 1 Cor. v. 13.

⁴ Ib. v. 5.

are sent to try his people—they are trials of their faith, love, humility, patience, and submission. The heavy trial at Ziklag brought forth at once David's graces and the people's corruptions. "David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters: but David encouraged himself in the Lord his God."¹ Satan, well aware of the tendency of affliction, when it bereaves men of their chief enjoyments, to excite their corruptions, anticipated this effect in the case of Job: "Put forth thine hand now, and touch his bone and his flesh, and he will curse thee to thy face." And Job's wife seconded the temptation: "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die." But what was his exercise under all this? "What! shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil? In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." Elisha asks the Shunammite, in her deep distress, "Is it well with thy husband? is it well with the child? And she said, It is well." How very different is it with others, who, when they are under the rod, spurn at it, "like a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke;" who, like Pharaoh, proudly ask, "Who is the Lord that I should obey him?" or as the impatient king of Israel, "Behold, this evil is of the Lord: why should I wait for the Lord any longer?"² What, my brethren, let me ask, has been the effect of affliction upon you?

4. The Lord Jesus sometimes employs in this work the fan of persecution and public calamity. It is said of the stony-ground hearers of the word, that they "dure only for a while; for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by they are offended." The fear of these deter some from joining the church of Christ; but others will join without counting the cost. In the prophecies of Daniel, Antiochus, that great persecutor, is said to "have intelligence with them that forsake the holy covenant. And some of them that have understanding shall fall, to try them, and to purge, and to make them white, even to the time of the end."³ Of all the crowds that flocked to our Lord during his earthly ministry, how few continued with him during his last sufferings. Yea, even those who had continued with him in his temptations, were blown away for a time, so that he trode the wine-press alone. Peter, the boldest and most strenuous of his adherents, denied him; and the rest, in violation of their solemn engagement, forsook him and fled. And who were left to own him? The thief, who was nailed with him to the cross, and the centurion of the band which guarded the scene of his crucifixion!

When the church becomes very corrupt, public judgments become necessary to vindicate the character of God, and maintain the credit of religion. It is sometimes necessary to let in a whirlwind, "a full wind," as it is called, on the floor, which sweeps it completely, and carries all away to a great distance. There is a fanning in wrath. "I will fan

¹ 1 Sam. xxx. 6.

² 2 Kings, vi. 33.

³ Dan. xi. 30, 35.

them with a fan in the gates of the land : I will bereave them of children, I will destroy my people, since they return not from their ways."¹ At first view, this may appear to be ruinous, instead of purifying, to the church. Hence that expression, "A dry wind of the high places in the wilderness toward the daughter of my people, not to fan, nor to cleanse."² The Chaldeans are there compared to that destructive wind which blows from the deserts of Arabia, burning up and destroying all before it, called the Simoom. For a time it appeared that the church of God was ruined—good as well as bad were swept away. Accordingly it follows, "Behold, he shall come up as a whirlwind. Woe unto us ! for we are spoiled." But the good were preserved—they were "sown among the people," and restored to their own land. "I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them ; and they shall be as though I had not cast them off."³

5. Christ employs for this purpose the fan of temptations. Afflictions and persecutions because of the word operate as temptations, and are so denominated in Scripture, because they try the character of professed Christians, discover the unsoundness of some, and the integrity of others. But temptations are more extensive. Prosperity, as well as affliction, is a sore trial to the constancy of professors. By it, to use the language of Job, they are "lifted up to the wind."⁴ How hard is it for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven ! And how hard for any man to withstand the influence even of a little breath of worldly prosperity ! I refer, at present, however, to temptations strictly so called.

We know that God "tempteth no man ;" he does not seduce us by persuasion, or by any operation on our hearts, into sin. But, for wise and holy ends, he permits men to be tempted, to be exposed to the enticements of sinners, and to those circumstances which have a tendency to draw out their corrupt inclinations. Hence we are directed to pray, "Lead us not into temptation." And there is a deep and awful dispensation of Providence in this respect towards unprofitable and ungodly professors of religion, which, while it demands from us humble adoration, ought to fill us with holy dread. "Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, God also sent them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie."⁵

Satan is at the head of the sinful agents of temptation. Though he acts chiefly by means of external objects addressed to the senses, yet that he has direct access to the soul there can be little reason to doubt, from his own nature as an unembodied spirit, or the account given of his operations in Scripture. He is called "the Spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." And again, "Whom the god of this world hath blinded." Christ, as the purifier of his church, permits him

¹ Jer. xv. 7.⁴ Job. xxx. 22.² Jer. iv. 11.³ Zech. x. 6, 9.⁵ 2 Thess. ii. 10—11.

to come into it, though he stands by him to restrain and curb him. Though he will not commit his fan into the hands of this destroyer, yet he permits him to use his own fan. Satan has his subaltern agents whom he employs as instruments in seduction. And as he spake at first by the mouth of the serpent, which "was more subtle than any of the beasts of the field," so he speaks still by the mouths of those who are most plausible, or who exert the greatest influence over us. He knows well how to "entice thee secretly by thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thine own soul."¹ If Peter had recollected the reproof of his master, "Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but the things that be of man," he would not have been so ignorant of the devices of the Tempter, as to suppose that he could not speak to him by the mouth of a maid-servant.

The wind of error and false doctrine carries away multitudes of giddy and unsound professors, who are "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine." There arose of old false prophets and false Christs, and under such specious appearances did they come, and such plausible language did they employ, that they drew away many disciples, and "if it had been possible would have deceived the very elect."

6. Lastly, Christ will accomplish this work by the fan of the final judgment. This is the last part of the process; and then will Christ "thoroughly purge his floor." All the preceding steps are preparative to this, and contribute to the end which it will accomplish. The purgation wrought by them is only partial. None of them, nor all of them together, make a complete separation between the chaff and the wheat. Hypocrites may read the word of God, and sit under the most faithful and searching ministry, and yet hold fast their hypocrisy, and think they are something, when they are nothing. The discipline of the house of God, even when most conscientiously and scripturally administered, can only remove those whose conduct is openly offensive. There was a Ham in the ark, a Judas in the sacred college of the apostles. We have no ground to think that affliction, or persecution, or temptation, or public calamities, carry away all that are insincere from a profession of religion. Professing Christians may go down to the pit under the influence of a deceived heart, and not know that they carry a lie in their right hand. "Many will say in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? Have we not eaten and drunk in thy presence? And when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?" They may go to the judgment-seat under such delusions, indulging presumptuous hopes, but they shall not abide there, far less come from it in that state. "The ungodly shall not stand in the

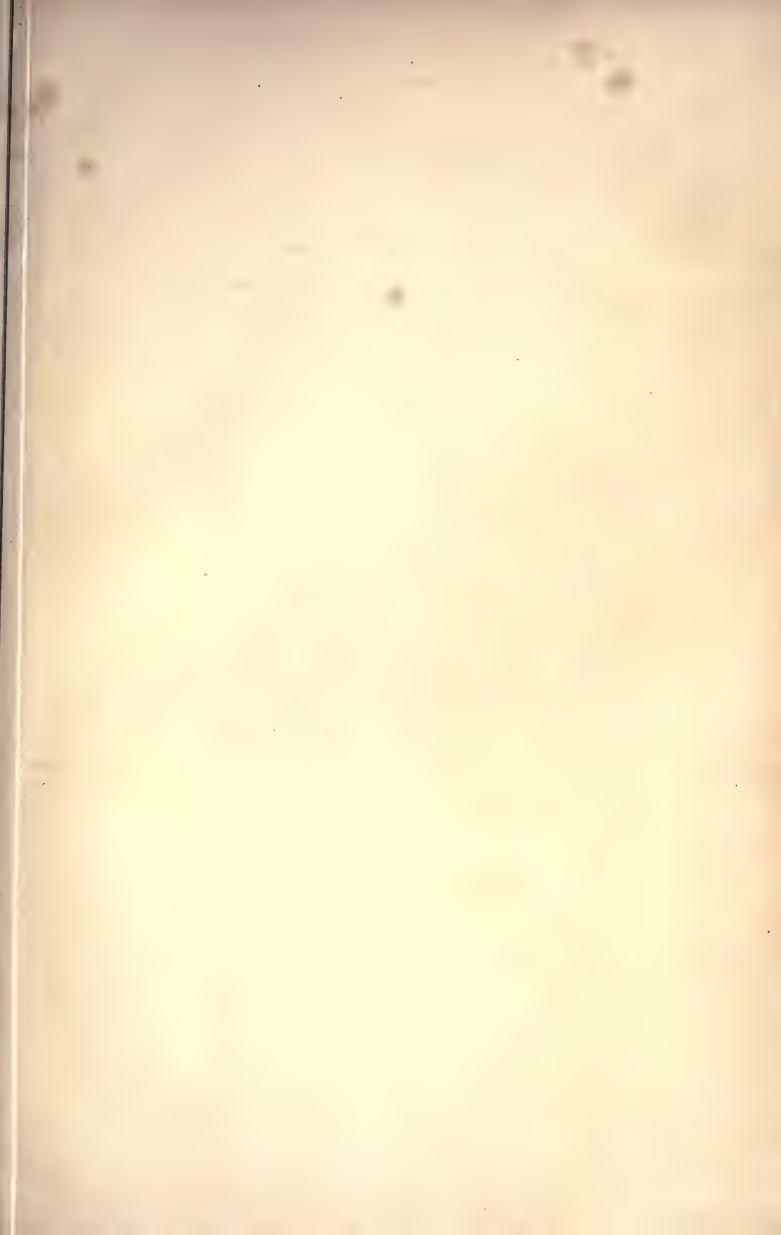
¹ Deut. xiii. 6.

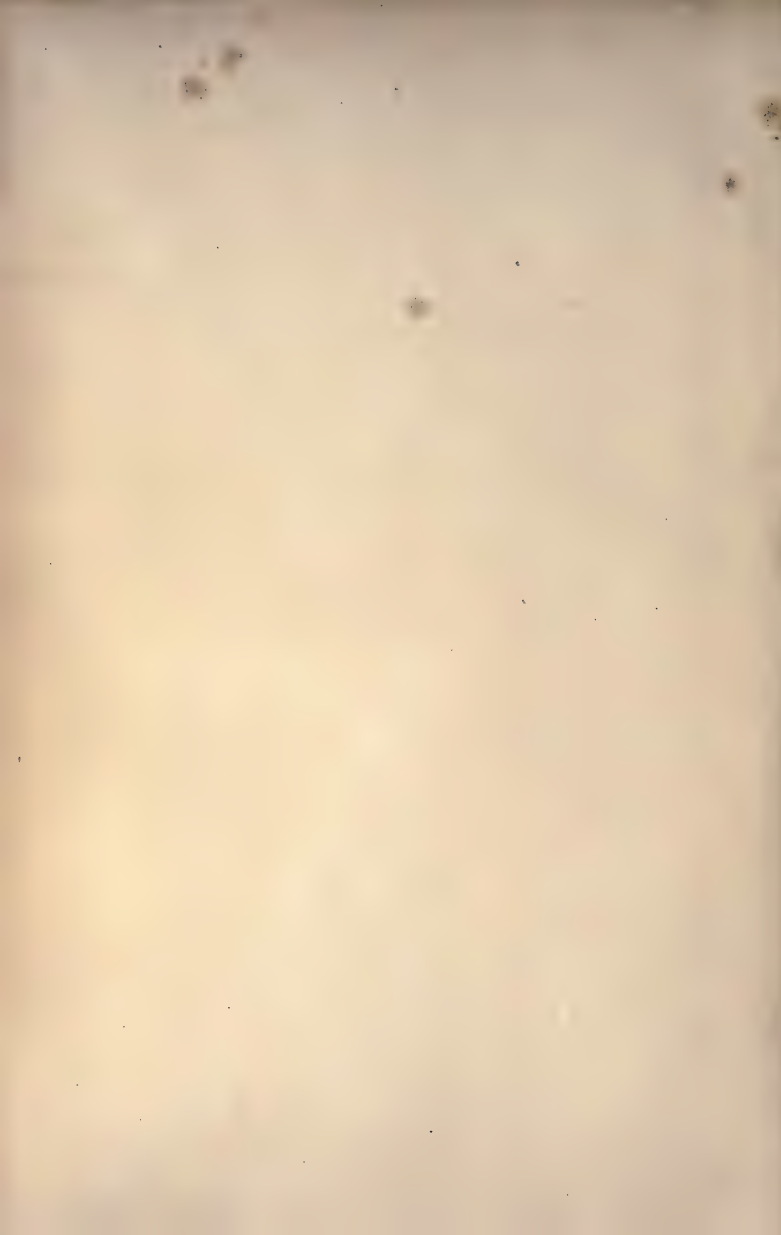
judgment." In this life, Christ has his fire in Zion and his furnace in Jerusalem, and there he sits as a refiner. But at the last day, "a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him." Alas! "who shall be able to abide the day of his coming?"

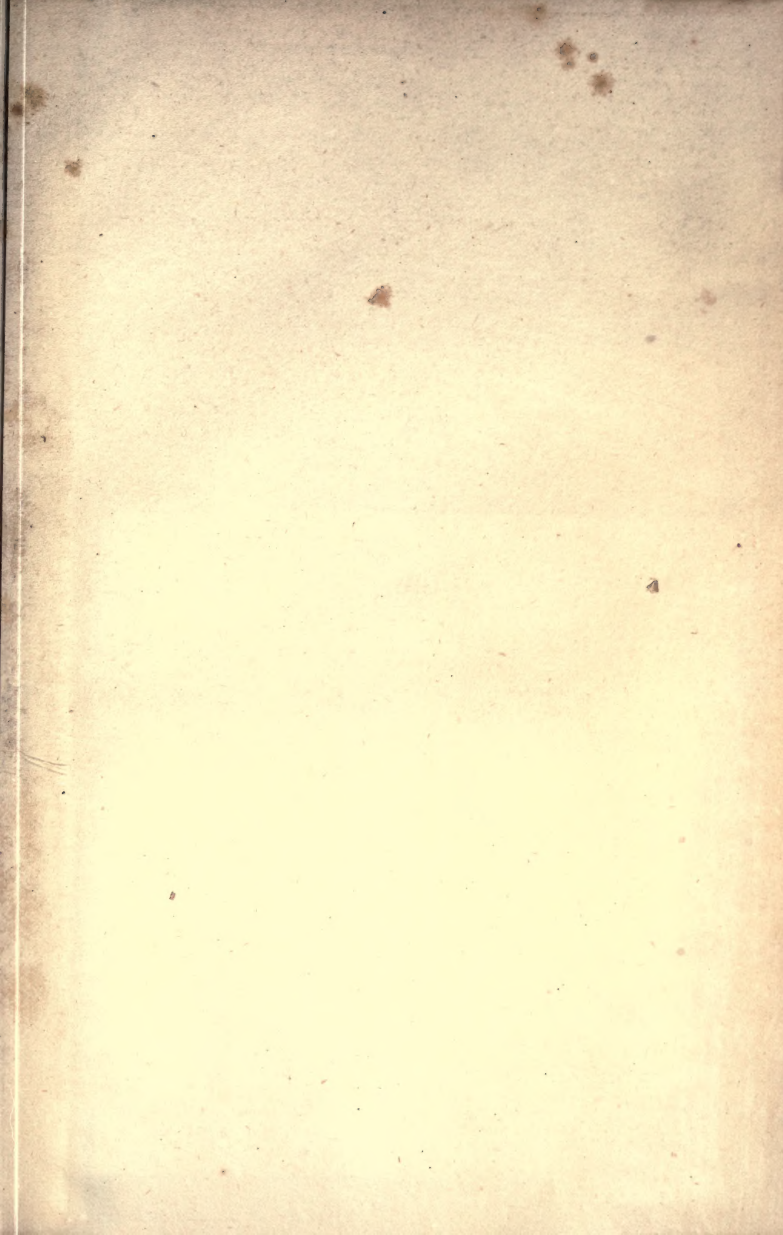
The trial shall be most strict. "We must all appear"—be made manifest—"before the judgment-seat of Christ." The Judge is the Omniscient One, and on that day will make all men to know that it is He that trieth the reins and searcheth the heart. When the Lord cometh, "he shall bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest the counsels of the hearts." Hence it is compared to the severest ordeal—that by fire: "Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is."

Then a complete separation shall be made between the righteous and the wicked. Not one of the righteous shall be found on the left hand of the Judge; and not one of the wicked on his right hand.

And this separation shall be final. No confusion or mixing of the two parties shall then appear. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal." "He shall gather his wheat into his garner, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire."









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